

A PLAIN
METHOD
OF
Christian Devotion:

Laid down in
Discourses, Meditations,
AND
PRAYERS,
Fitted to the various OCCASIONS of a
RELIGIOUS LIFE.

In Three Parts.

Translated and Revised from the *French*
of Monsieur J U R I E U,

By WILLIAM FLEETWOOD, D. D.
Late Lord Bishop of Ely.

THE TWENTY SIXTH EDITION.

L O N D O N:

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T O T H E
R E A D E R.



T cannot (God be thanked) be said, that there is any need of multiplying books of this nature, because we have such plenty of them ready to our hands : But certainly, there may be (and, I question not, is) made great use, both of their *number* and *diversity* ; for 'tis almost the same with the food of the *soul*, as it is with that of the *body* : The end of all mens eating is indeed the same, namely, the preservation of their life and health ; but neither are their stomachs or digestions equal and alike, and therefore they consult their several appetites. To be devoutly minded, is (or should be) the end and aim of all men, but the ways to come to it are just as many, and as different, as the tempers, humours, inclinations and constitutions of men are ; and therefore *different* treatises of, and helps to devotion, will be
A 2 always

P R E F A C E.

always *useful*, if not absolutely *necessary*. There is a *milk* for infants in *religion*, as well as in *years*, and there is stronger meat for stronger stomachs.

I am as well persuaded, as I can be in a matter of this nature, that nothing ever was composed more suitable to the tempers and affections of mankind in general, that more consulteth the desires and needs of human nature, or is better fitted to promote an *equal*, *regular*, and *reasonable* devotion, than our *book of common-prayer*: And yet this has not hindred many excellent and extraordinary persons of our church, both *dead* and *living*, from composing other lesser *manuals* or larger treatises, both for their own, and for the publick use and service: And all of them have had their several followers and admirers; and all of them have had their blessed fruits; which may not only serve for an *excuse* for *putting out*, but also for an *encouragement* to the *reading* of this *Treatise of Devotion*.

The fame and reputation of its *Author*, with the multitude of its *editions*, may recommend the purchasing this book to them that otherwise know it not; but the good spirit it is written withal, has made it dear and valuable to them that do; and the good grace of God, I hope, will make it serviceable

P R E F A C E.

serviceable to all that meet with it. It is to no great purpose to account to the publick, for the translation and setting forth this book at this season; no reason will be good enough, if it do not answer the ends of a book of devotion; and if it do, there will be need of none. 'Tis easier for me to believe it will be acceptable to all good people; and upon presumption of some merit, to be bold to ask the reader these few favours, for letting him have this book in *English*.

First, That neither this, nor any other *treatise of devotion*, hinder his frequenting the *publick prayers* and *service of the church*. There is a most peculiar *grace and comeliness* in those *assemblings*, which, by *absenting*, is *deform'd*. And who would chuse to spoil that *beauty of holiness*, that conspires so sweetly to the raising up the soul to God, and forwarding devotion? And who would lose the merit of obedience, where the commands of our superiors in the church are so reasonable, the performances so easy, and the fruits so profitable? And lastly, who can tell the uncommon force of those collected and united prayers; or, for a little matter, would deprive himself of the benefit of that conjunction.

Secondly,

P R E F A C E.

Secondly, That he would use great moderation, prudence and discretion, in his *judgments* concerning devotion; that he would not be vainly puffed up in his imaginations, and think himself *truly devout*, when he sometimes feels within himself those *ardors, transports and elevations* of soul he may meet withal, in *this*, or any other *treatise of devotion*; unless he also find himself thereby influenc'd in a *steady, close, and constant* practice of the duties, both of *natural and revealed* religion. For otherwise, he may chance unhappily to acquiesce in the meer *mechanism* of nature, or the light effects of some poor, short-liv'd accidental cause; and mistake the impetuous heats of fancy, and a strong imagination, for the benign and gentle warmths of true devotion, that constantly excite men to some *good performances*.

Thirdly, That if he find himself already in possession (as it were) of a *constant, regular and serious* practice of his duty in every other particular, he would not be too much dejected and disconsolate, if he do not *frequently* feel those arduences and elevations of soul, he may sometimes have had himself, have often heard of from others, and always found in *manuals of devotion*. Let him thank God for, and be contented with

P R E F A C E.

with (for the present) that happy state whereunto he has attained, and not lie down in sorrow and despair, for what he has not reach'd. The operations of *grace* upon the *soul* are no more the same in all men, than those of *nature* are upon the *body*. The good spirit of God blows (like the wind) both *where* and *how* it lifts; always in *mercy* where it does blow, but not in *judgment* always where it bloweth not, or is absent, as to its extraordinary influences. The extasies of devotion are most unquestionably sweet and ravishing to them that feel them; but are certainly no farther useful than they contribute to the bettering and amending of our lives, and to the improvement of some grace and virtue; and a constant tenour of good practice, is a more secure and more desirable state, than any unequal visionary one, and being caught sometimes into the third heavens. Yet,

Fourthly, That he would not lazily rest himself in the dry, jejune performance of the practick part of his duty, without aspiring towards heaven, and raising up his soul to God, by frequent contemplation. I did not intend to acquit him (in the foregoing article) from endeavouring this with all his might, by all the reasonable and usual

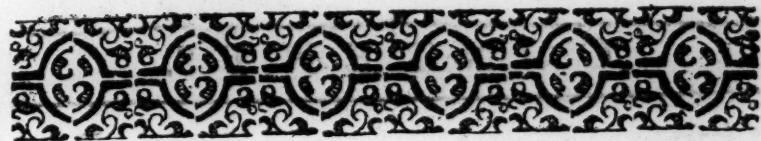
P R E F A C E.

usual methods of attaining it. But, that he should not be overwhelm'd with grief or sad solicitude, if, after having done his best, he find his heart more cold and unaffected in devotion, than he look'd for, or desir'd.

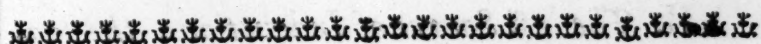
Fifthly, That he would not rashly judge or measure *other mens* devotion by *his own*; or superciliously condemn and scorn the ways and methods other men pursue the same *end* by, because they fall not in exactly with *his* private one. It is great odds, but many things within this book, will appear too fine and spiritual to one; to another inconceivable; and hardly practicable to a third; but there are others to whom they will seem neither.

Lastly, That he would daily put up this good prayer to God; *That the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by his governance, that his church may joyfully serve him in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

W. Fleetwood.



CONTENTS.



P A R T I.

Chap.		Page.
I.	 <i>H A T Devotion is.</i>	1
	II. <i>Of the Effects of Devotion.</i>	9
	III. <i>That Devotion is very necessary.</i>	21
	IV. <i>That Devotion is exceeding rare, and neglected.</i>	31
	V. <i>That Indevotion is a greater fault than we think for.</i>	40

P A R T II.

I.	 <i>H A T Impurity of Life is the first Source of Indevotion.</i>	52
	II. <i>Of the Love of the World; the second Source of Indevotion.</i>	60
	III. <i>Of too great Sensibility of earthly Pleasures; the third Source of Indevotion.</i>	67
	IV. <i>Of the Cares and perplexities of this World; a fourth Source of Indevotion.</i>	79
	V. <i>Exceeding Multiplicity of Affairs; a fifth Source of Indevotion.</i>	88
	a. VI. <i>The</i>	

C O N T E N T S.

Chap.	Page.
VI. <i>The sixth Source of Indevotion; the Custom of letting the mind stray on different Objects.</i>	99
VII. <i>The last Source of Indevotion; the Rarity and Interruption of holy Exercises.</i>	III

The Prosecution of the Second P A R T.

Of Worldly-mindedness, and the love of Pleasure, the grand Source of Indevotion.

I. T H A T *Pleasure is a mortal Enemy to Devotion: What are the Sentiments and Maxims of the World, touching the Use of Pleasure and Delights.* 123

II. *That the Pleasures of the Senses, neither in their Use, nor Abuse, agree with the spirit of Christianity and Devotion.* 142

III. *What can be innocent Pleasures. That Devotion is not chagrine, nor an Enemy to Pleasure.* 168

IV. *That we ought not to consult our Heart and our Senses in the Choice of Pleasures. That Devotion leads to true Pleasures.* 193

V. *That young Folks have no Privilege for the enjoyment of sensual Pleasures, or to dispense with their Duty of Devotion.* 217

CONTENTS.

PART III.

Of the Helps that may lead to Devotion.

Chap.	Page.
I. T HE first general Advice ; to Will, Desire, and Ask it.	239
II. The second general Advice ; to lead a holy Life in the practice of all Virtues.	250
III. The third general Advice, for the Help of Devotion ; to guard the Senses, and keep the Soul as it were lock'd up.	262
IV. The fourth general Advice for the Help of Devotion ; to persevere in holy Exercises, and not to be discourag'd by any Difficulties.	272
V. The fifth general Advice for the Help of Devotion ; to have God always before our Eyes.	283
VI. The first particular Advice ; to have our Hours of Devotion well regulated, and well chosen.	294
VII. The second particular Advice for the Help of Devotion ; Solitude, and holy Assembling together.	307
VIII. The third particular Advice for the Help of Devotion ; Meditation, and Reading.	319
IX. The fourth particular Advice to help Devotion ; Prayer.	335
X. The fifth particular Advice ; Fasting and Mortification.	345
XI.	Of

CONTENTS.

XI. *Of the rash Judgment that is made
against the Devout.* 357

Imprimatur.

*Carolus Alston, R. P. D.
Hen. Episc. Lond.
à Sacris.*

April 22.
1692,

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A PLAIN
METHOD
OF
Christian Devotion.

PART I.

CHAP. I.

What Devotion is.



DEVOTION is not a Subject to be defin'd, according to Rules; it belongs more properly to the Closet than the Schools; and pious Souls, though ignorant, will instruct us better in the matter, than the most learned ones, that have no Conscience. But however, the Schools that concern themselves
B with

with every thing, have undertaken to define Devotion, as well as all the rest: Some of them, by, *a tender Mollification of the heart, and a mind that is mov'd*: Others, by, *that inward Consolation that the faithful feel in their exercises of piety*: Others say it is, *that Joy and readiness of heart, with which the Saints are carried to the Service of God*. Some make it to consist, in Pleasures inconceivable and full of glory, that fill the Saints, and make them say, *My soul is satisfied, as it were with marrow and fatness*: And others in Desires and Longings. Upon all this I say, it may, perhaps, be rashness to attempt to define what we cannot well express; for this is of the number of those things that cannot well be conceived, but by those that feel it; or if conceived, yet cannot be sufficiently set forth: At least it cannot be defin'd by any one word, or any single movement of the Soul; for 'tis it self a compound of the several Kinds of Movements, and is made up of very different Sentiments or Senses: It has its Desires and Distrusts, Hopes and Fears, Love and Hatred, Joy and

and Sorrow, Ardor, Zeal, Alacrity and Transports. It has its Desires; for every Soul, truly devout, does earnestly desire to be at peace, and one with God. *When shall I enter there (says she) and appear before the presence of God? As the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God.* It has its Distrusts; for a good Soul is in perpetual fear of being unworthy to possess those Graces it desires so earnestly; she cries, with the Centurion, to our Lord, *I am not worthy thou should'st enter under my roof;* and if she is in possession of her God, she is afraid of losing him, and watches even whilst she sleeps, lest any thing should take from her, her well-beloved. There is also Fear in the composition of this Virtue; for when a Soul is fallen into any grievous Sin, the Presence of God amazes her, and she is terrified at his great Majesty; and even in Innocence, a Soul truly devout, never presents it self before its God, without remembring, that the Angels tremble in his presence, and saying, *Oh how dreadful is this place, surely the Lord is in it!* Love also has its share,

and one may almost say, Love is the source and spring of all devotion; in considering both the beauty and the goodness of God, the Soul is moved with a violent desire and longing after union with him, and cries out with the Spouse, *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is pleasanter than wine.* Hatred also will come in; for a faithful Soul cannot love God, without renouncing the love of it self, and hating the World, whose love is incompatible with that of God. Joy also is a great ingredient in this composition; and therefore the wise Man saith, *The heart of the just is a continual feast; Thou hast put more joy into my heart,* says David, *than the wicked have in their abundance. My heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad, therefore my soul shall rest in peace.* But yet we must own, this Light is not altogether pure and unmix'd; Devotion has its Sadnesses amidst its Joys, and oft-times sighs at the remembrance of its Infirmities and Failings. Lastly, a very lively Readiness and Ardor enters in and seems to be the Body of Devotion, and is that which appears

appears most in a faithful Soul. She has inconceivable Pleasure and Transports also in her Exercises of Piety, she hears the Word, she prays, she reads, she meditates and communicates, just as she does the Things of the World she most delights in. She flies to these Performances with abundance of Joy, and performs them with abundance of Ease. These are, I think, the Movements that make up Devotion; but we must needs remember that they are not always in the same Degree, even in the same Persons. Some of these Sentiments are always uppermost; at one time Joy prevails, and at another Sorrow; sometimes great Transports, and at others, Longings. And hence it comes, if you consult the Saints about the Nature of Devotion, that they will give you very different Answers; for all will tell you what they feel themselves, and each of them perhaps has differing Sentiments. And sometimes too, it happens that one and the same Soul finds her Devotion different at several times, each of the foresaid Movements reigning in its turn; to day a Christian shall be full of Hopes

of some great Good in Prospect; to morrow full of Joy for the Possession of it: To day, reigns Sadness for his Sins, and at another time Desires and Longings: And all these Changes happen according to the several States and Conditions in which the Soul finds it self, and according to the different prospects Meditation furnishes it withal; considering God sometimes with respect to his Love and Mercy, sometimes with respect to his Severity and Justice: sometimes also he will look on his Conscience on that side where it is strongliest fortified, and sometimes where 'tis weakest; and this will cause a Change in the Movements of his Devotion: Lightness and Joy it self, which seems to be the very Soul of Devotion, is not always inseparable from it; for sometimes the best of Souls find themselves clog'd, and dull, and very sad, but when the heavy Fit is over, and lightness returns again, they find themselves sorely aggrieved for having wanted it at all.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION.

Alas, my Soul, how ignorant art thou of heavenly things ! The natural Man receives not the Things that be of God, for they are foolishness to him. These are those deep Abysses that thou canst not sound : Thy light is but as darkness. But 'tis not yet so strange thou should'st not understand those heavenly things that God hath reserved to himself, and hath as it were enclosed in his own bosom, since thou art ignorant of what God does in thee thy self, and do'st not know the heavenly things that are in thine own heart. Vain and haughty as thou art, and proud of those advantages that Nature bestowed on thee above all other Creatures visible ! Thou say'st thou art an Angel incarnate, say rather that thou art an Angel imprisoned in a sad and dark abode, that knowest but in part, and seest but in part, obscurely, and as in a glass, and through a veil darkned with flesh and blood.

PRAYER.

P R A Y E R.

O my God, Father of lights, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, *Open mine eyes that I may see the wonders of thy Law; I am a stranger and a sojourner on earth, oh bide not thy commandments from me:* I am in quest of what devotion is, but cannot possibly discover it, without thy aid; I shall in vain seek for it in another's works, if I do not find it in my own heart: it is a depth, and who can fathom it? I find not what I seek for, there, and where shall I find it? Oh I will find it then in thee, my God, who art indeed the source of what I seek for. Fill then my heart with flames of zeal and piety, that so my soul may have no need of studying any thing besides it self, to know what true devotion is; and when 'tis known, that it may love it infinitely it self, and make it be beloved of others also. Oh let it shine in all my actions, and in all my words, like a bright lamp, to lighten all my neighbours, and enkindle in their hearts

hearts the holy flames of pure devotion!
Amen.

C H A P. II.

Of the Effects of Devotion.

IN speaking of the nature of Devotion in the foregoing Chapter, we have insinuated all its Effects; but it may not be unprofitable to enlarge ourselves a little further hereupon; these Effects well understood will lead us to the knowledge of their Cause, and will serve as a touch-stone, as it were, for the good Souls to try thereby the purity and progress of their Devotion. The first of these Effects, is a vehement desire of conversing with God, and pouring out its Sorrows and Concerns into his Bosom; of hearing his Word, and receiving the gages of his Love in his most holy Sacraments. You see these movements in *David* when he sighed after God's House; and thought nothing more insupportable in all his exile, than his
being

being remov'd from the courts of the Lord's house: He is jealous even of the Swallow's blest condition, that find themselves a nest therein: he would be Porter to that house, and be content never to leave it. *My soul*, says he, *longeth after thy courts; one thing have I desir'd of God, which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of God all the days of my life*: he owns, that the hopes of meeting with God again within his house, supported him from falling into Despair, *I should utterly have fainted, if I had not verily believed to have seen the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*. A faithful Soul hath no less passionate desires to be in private with her God, than *David* had to be with him in publick in his Temple: she looks upon all time as lost that she is oblig'd to give unto the World, and when she can break loose from its affairs, she runs into God's bosom, as the dry Hart unto the water-brooks; as the sad Miser to the search of gain, or as the Courtier, at the hour and place, to see his Prince, and to be seen, and to receive of him considerable favours.

The

The second Effect, is a Joy that we may call inconceivable : the Faithful in his Devotions feels his heart enlarged ; the Holy Ghost dwells there with all the riches of his Grace, and all the treasures of his Consolations. He that shall ask this Soul, why she is so content, it may be shall receive no answer from her ; but the true cause of it is this, that God has spread abroad in her his sweet and saving Influences, that are accompanied continually with full Felicity. The Pleasure that the Miser finds in counting up his Riches, the Ambitious tastes in hoping for new Honours, or the Voluptuous finds in his Excesses and Debauches, are dull insipid Pleasures in comparison of those a Soul truly devout finds in her communicating with God, It is a Sea where all the Troubles and Afflictions of the Flesh are overwhelmed ; the Persecuted find their Refuge there, the Poor their Wealth, the Sick their Health, the Despis'd their Glory, the Humble ones their Exaltation ; in a word, the most Miserable find a general forgetfulness of all their Miseries : 'tis there a Soul disgusted

gusted with the World, meets with that true repose that makes him look without envy, and even with pity, on the cruel agitations of those Worldlings that are fastened to *Ixion's* Wheels, and *Sisyphus's* Stone; that is, those restless Labours that return perpetually, and never know an end.

And hence proceeds a third Effect of Devotion, and that is, a forgetfulness of the World: when the Faithful shuts his Closet-door, we may say he shuts his door to all the World; and says within himself, get ye behind me worldly Thoughts, Objects of Vanity withdraw, and come not near me in this place: let me enjoy in peace this place of Refuge, and let me here entirely give my self to God: The faithful dies on this sort every day, for Death itself not more defaces worldly Images, than does Devotion, when it withdraws a christian Soul out of the Commerce of the World. This Soul can truly say, *The world is crucified to me, and I to it, it is not I that live, but Jesus Christ my Lord that liveth in me; and the life that I live, is in the faith of the*
Son

Son of God, that hath loved me, and given himself a ransom for me. We need not wonder if the World gives place that very moment, for I suppose 'twill find but little entertainment in a Soul prepared as I have been describing. God will take up this heart, of which he hitherto possessed but a share; for a heart truly devout, plunges itself (if we may speak so) wholly into God, and God for his part wholly enters into it. If, in this state, he casts his Eyes upon the World, he looks upon it as below, and with an air of contempt. Alas, says he, what are the Riches, Honours, and Advantages, that do so often end in everlasting death, to the Riches God affords me here within, nay to my God himself whom I possess with so much pleasure? these earthly Goods shall soon be lost; but I shall never lose this sovereign Good, that filleth me within; and Death, that shall despoil the living of their Pomp, shall cloath me with new Honours, and fresh Glories.

A fourth Effect, is Sprightliness and lively Joy in running and advancing to
the

the exercises of Piety. A General of an Army flies to the Battle, when he sees the Conquest certain ; but the faithful one has other sort of wings, that make him fly whither Devotion calls him : he knows not what that Heaviness and Languor means, that keeps back those who are called to labour ; he is not of the slothful's mind, that turns upon his Bed, as a door upon its Hinges, and contends with sleep and laziness, with design to be overcome. The true Devout, is one of those Eagles, of which our Lord spoke, *where the carcase is, thither also will the eagles be gathered together.* He knows that he shall find his Saviour, dead heretofore, but now alive, either within the Temple, or his Closet ; thither he flies with the rapidity of an hungry Eagle, and nothing possibly can stop his course ; Friends, Enemies, Employs, Business, Intreaties, Threatnings, Fears, Dangers, he will surmount all Obstacles, that set themselves to hinder him.

Another Effect, is a certain Exaltation of Soul, that I can find no other name for

for, than a kind of Extasy, by which the Soul is ravish'd, as it were out of its self; it is so fixt on Contemplation of celestial Objects, that it not only has no farther intelligence with earthly Things, but it has also lost its Senses, has no more Ears, nor Eyes, and neither sees nor hears any longer. *St. Peter*, whilst he prayed, saw the Heavens open'd, and a Sheet tied at four corners, let down to the Earth: *St. Paul* in prayer was ravish'd up to the third Heaven: and true Devout ones have even to this day their Extasies: they see the Heavens opened with *St. Stephen*, and they are carried thither with *St. Paul*, for they enter into secret Commerce and Intelligence with God: The Soul is so taken up herein, that she sees nothing of what passes without, and employing all her might in contemplating upon God, it is not strange if she has nothing left for other Objects. *Blessed are those* (saith great *St. Basil*) *that are wholly busied in contemplating this true Beauty; for being fastned there, by the bonds of Charity and heavenly Love, they forget both their Relations*

lations and their Friends, their Houses and their Goods, and even the necessities of Meat and Drink. And why should not this be done in matters of Devotion, as well as in every thing besides? When Men are very intent on Reading, clearing an Accompt, answering an Adversary, or the like, a thousand Objects pass before their Eyes, which they perceive not : a faithful Soul is so included and collected in itself, that 'tis not easily diverted by whatsoever passes : if it prays, it is wholly in Heaven ; if it hears, it is wholly fixt in suspense on the Tongue of the Speaker ; if it reads, its Heart is wholly where its Eyes are set ; if it meditates, it is wholly swallowed up in its Subjects ; and if the fluttering Birds, vain light Thoughts, come in to defile the Sacrifice, it does immediately, like *Abraham*, drive them away with Anger. Thus I explain, and thus conceive the Extasies of Devotion. If you will otherwise take that term, for those effectual Ravishments, that were the privileges of the Prophets, and the Saints of the first rank, I should hardly think there were

Examples

Examples of that nature to be found ; I have not faith enough to believe what is said of those Devotions, that elevate not only Souls, but even Bodies from the Earth, and carry them up aloft.

The last effect of Devotion, of which I will speak, is a certain kind of Fire that warms and heats the Heart. One cannot well conceive this thing, that has not felt it, and I cannot otherwise give it you, than in the words of the Saints: *Did not our hearts burn within us whilst we talked with us, and opened the scriptures? My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned, and at the last I spake with my tongue.* They say the devout Souls have oft been seen, with their Countenances as it were inflamed amidst their Devotions, which must needs proceed from the heat of their Hearts, that spreads and shews it self upon the Face. One may call this Fire a fermentation of the spirits of Piety, which oftentimes makes impressions, even in the Eyes: and hence, it may be, came that brightness of St. Stephen, of whom it is said, his Enemies *saw his*
C *face,*

face, as it had been the face of an Angel, his flaming zeal spreading itself even to his Eyes, and making them appear sparkling, and full of Fire and Glory. These Flashes also are not without their Showers; this Fire, I mean, is ordinarily accompanied with Tears, the Heart is heated, swells and grows big, and breaks in tenderness, and then the Eyes flow with Tears. St. *Austin* represents himself in one of these warm Fits, and says, *After strong Meditation had drawn out all my misery from the bottom, where it was hid to represent it to the Eyes of my Heart, there was suddenly raised a mighty storm and tempest in me, which was followed by an excessive shower of tears.* These Tears proceed not always from sorrow for sin, but are sometimes caused by a struggling of Thoughts, and a confusion of good Motions, that throw the Soul into a kind of disorder, which yet is sweeter, and much better than the greatest Calm.

MEDITA-

MEDITATION.

How were it to be wished, that Men were but as holy, as they are eloquent and understanding! They make fine Pictures, but where, alas, are their Originals? I see the Characters of true Devotion are exceeding beautiful and lovely: but, oh, the more I think hereon, the more I am confounded: when I consider what I ought to be, and then examine what I am, I think that I am either nothing, or only what I should not be: I find within me none of those impatient longings after God, and of conversing with him by holy Prayers and holy Meditations. I long indeed, but 'tis not after God's House, nor yet for the retirement of my Closet. Ah weak and feeble are those kind of longings! I do violence to my heart in withdrawing it from the Arms of this World, to put it into God's hands. I go into my Closet to my Devotions, but 'tis rather to acquit my self of a duty laid upon me, than to gratify my Inclinations. Where is this joy that I should taste in acts of Piety? Where are the transports, extasies, and flames, and kindlings of that bea-

venly Fire, that I have been describing? All is dead within me, and if I think to leave the World when I begin to enter into my Closet, I find my self deceiv'd, for there it enters with me. I feel in exercising every faculty of my Soul a dreadful heaviness, that stops my flights, and throws me to the Earth again; all my endeavours upwards are but short and weak, and rise not half-way towards Heaven.

P R A Y E R.

Have pity on my sad condition, O my Father and my God, draw me and I shall run after thee. Why should I tarry in the shades of death? Raise me and quicken me, thou son of righteousness, that carriest healing in thy wings; let him that calls himself the rising Sun, visit me from on high in the bowels of his mercy: Let my heart burn, when I read thy Scriptures, and hear thy Word: Let my Prayers be earnest, and my piety sustained by the force and flames of thy strong love, and of thy grace. And thou my soul, wait not for grace, with
arms

arms across, but go before, and call and say, *Come thou, Lord Jesus, come : Haste thee O God of my Salvation : Awake thou that sleepest, rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.* Chase hence this sloth, be rocked no more upon this bed of Security: banish this coldness, and shake off this sluggish heaviness: take up the eagle's wings, and fly to Heaven, into the bosom of thy Lord, where thou shalt find such sweets, as thou hast never tasted, never seen, or heard, and such as never entered thy imagination.

C H A P. III.

That Devotion is very necessary.

NO Man can doubt of the necessity of Devotion, that does but understand, or can express in any tolerable measure, what it is: Devotion is the Soul of the Soul, and life of Piety; 'tis that which gives the price and value to the exercises and divine worship of

a good Soul : Preparations are necessary to every Thing. The Orator that is to speak in publick, gathers first his matter, and then essays to put it in good form : A Soldier that must fight, prepares his Arms and calls his courage up : and he that's going to a nuptial Feast, puts on his best attire. Why then should we present ourselves to God by Prayer, by reading or by hearing of his Word, seeking his Aid, or rendring him our Thanks, without the holy and preparatory dispositions of true Piety, that are of so great value in his fight ? We always do that well, which we do heartily ; and nothing can be done to any purpose, unless we make our selves Parties concern'd ; the Soldier that carries not his heart along with him to fight, will turn his back before the Battle ends : and the Orator whose mind is not touch'd with what he says himself, will never move another. If therefore works of the Tongue and Hand, will signify so little without the Heart, how shall the Heart, alas ! do any thing without itself ? 'Tis thus I call the exercise
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of Piety and the Service of God. Can a Lute play that is not scrued and set, or can a Bow be drawn that is not bent and strung? The heart of Man is as an Instrument or Lute, whose Musick charms the very Ears of God, but then it must be tun'd with all its Vertues as so many strings, and Devotion must be as it were a kind of Soul to move and actuate all the rest. Prayer is a Dart that flies to Heaven, but 'tis Devotion only gives it Strength and Wings. Prayer is a Sacrifice, the Calves of the Lips, and Offering of the Heart. One should not willingly present to God the common Victims, without choice and without preparation: the Paschal Lamb was separated from the rest of the flock four days before it was sacrificed. Offer not then to God your Prayers cold and impure, but separate your Hearts from all these worldly Vanities, and from the croud of sinful Thoughts, if you would have it acceptable in the sight of God.

Dead is the Soul without Devotion, and the heart a very Carcase; what rashness were it then to lay a dead corrupt-

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ed Beast before God's sacred Altars? Will he not say to those indevout Souls, I hate, I despise your Feast-days, I will not regard the Peace-offerings of your fat Beasts, nor the sweet Perfumes and Incense that you offer me, I cannot bear them. Devotion is a fire without which our Sacrifices cannot be consum'd or made perfect: 'tis a Fire that comes down from Heaven, and an emanation of the Rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and that must carry up to Heaven the smoke of our Incense. Believe it, Christians, that without Devotion our Prayers will falter by the way, and will be never able to penetrate those thick gross Clouds of Errors and of Sins that part us from our God. The matter that makes up those heavy massy Thunderbolts, could never have ascended up into the middle Region of the Air, had they not once been carried up upon the Wings of some inflamed Exhalations. So neither can our Hearts, our earthly Prayers ascend to Heaven, unless the flames of strong Devotion bear them up.

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I return therefore to this, that we ought to put our Hearts in good Condition, that we may look for good Success upon our serving God: And yet all the Preparation we can make of our Hearts, will never make them good enough for him, to whom we offer them. He will do us a very great Favour, if he accept of them even in their best Condition. What therefore can we look for but a shameful sad Refusal, if we offer him an undevout Soul? God does not hear Mens Prayers, if the Heart be not well dispos'd to make them. *Seek and ye shall find*, says our Lord; but seek earnestly, for otherwise you shall not find. It is but once that God hath said, *I was found of them that sought me not*: This does not happen every Day; these are singular Events which make no Rules; the common Law is this, *Ask, and it shall be given*, take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, and thou shalt obtain it.

For what is not Devotion good? It is of use in all Places, at all Times, and in all Things, in Churches and in Clo-

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fets; by it we hear the Word pronounc'd by Men, but, as it truly is, the Word of God, and we receive it as the parched Ground takes in the Rain. By it the consideration of God's Benefits affects us, the remembrance of his Love inflames us, his Promises comfort, his Threats amaze us, and his Consolations work upon our Hearts. Without this, the Word, which should be as a two-edg'd Sword, is blunted on the hardness of our Heart; and without this we add the crime of Insensibility to that of Impenitence. By this we look on every Thing within the Church with Veneration, the Preacher as the Messenger of God, his Word as a Voice from Heaven, the Faithful as God's Children, and as so many Troops of Angels that rejoice in his Presence; his Sacraments as precious Vessels, which to appearance are contemptible, but which communicate the Treasures of God's Grace and Mercy. This true Devotion makes our Closets little Temples, where the Divinity descends, and over which he spreads his Wings, as the Cherubim did theirs over the

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the Propitiatory. This Devotion causes God to speak to us, as we to him; and makes us hear his Oracles, and tast his Consolations, when he says, *Son, or Daughter, be of good courage, arise, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Oh happy Soul whom God thus honours with these blessed Entertainments! Now this is never done but by ardent Devotion; till we have called upon him, nay, till we have forced him in some measure to it. These desires of Devotion may well be those Eyes of which the Spouse speaks, *Cant. 6. 5. Turn away thine Eyes from me, for they have overcome me.* Hence ye profane Ones, that know not the use of Devotion. You say that Courage is the Rampart of Estates, the publick and the private Security: That Liberality sweetens the Misfortunes of the miserable; that Justice is the Nurse of Peace and Bond of Society, that Temperance gives tranquility to the Soul and health to the Body, but that Devotion of all Vertues is good for just nothing, that it effeminates the Soul and intimidates the Mind. Call not that Universal Vertue useless,

without which all the rest are but as Shadows; for he that has not a habit of Devotion, and refers not all his Vertues to the Glory of God, is a false Virtuoso. Call not that Vertue useless that appeases the wrath of God, that diverts the Storms and Tempests from Estates; that would have rescued *Sodom* from the Fire, had there but been ten righteous Persons in it, that like *Abraham* had devoutly interceded for it. A Vertue that so often saves the Vessel of the Church from Shipwreck, that fills the Conscience with profound Peace and heavenly Light. Say not that it effeminates Souls, when it raises and strengthens Mens Hearts, and makes them run to Death, despise Dangers, and spare nothing in occasions, where the Glory of God calls and engages them.

MEDITATION.

Behold then, one of the causes of my Coldness; one of the Reasons why my Soul has so little Devotion, is this, that it comprehends not sufficiently the necessity of this great

great Vertue. It knows that Aliments are necessary to the conservation of the Body, and therefore it desires them with great earnestness, and seeks for them with wondrous diligence; but it is negligent of every Thing that serves to nourish Piety and Devotion, because it believes not them to be either necessary or useful. Thou seest, O my Soul, abundance of People save themselves by a dead and faint Devotion, and go to Heaven by very slow Steps, and thou persuadest thy self that God will not be more rigorous to thee, or exact more of thee than of others; but Oh this is a false and fatal way of reasoning! He whom thou thinkest is in the way to Heaven, is in the way perhaps to Hell. There is a way that seemeth right in the sight of Men, but the Issues of it tend to Death. These coldnesses with which thou thinkest God content, are always insignificant; 'twill be but cold comfort to be able one Day to say, We have pray'd to thee, we have call'd upon thee, we have serv'd thee; when our Lord shall notwithstanding answer, I know not who ye are, go hence, depart from me, ye that are neither

cold nor hot, I spew you out of my Mouth.

P R A Y E R.

Lead me, O God, conduct my Soul in the sure Path: I cannot sound thy Mercy, but I know not whither thou wilt carry the rigors of thy Justice. I cannot tell if thou wilt pardon so many People that serve thee with so little zeal, and so much indevotion; but this I know, they are not worthy of thy clemency, unless they shall sincerely sorrow for their having served thee so coldly. Light of my Soul, thou heavenly Spirit, that hast illuminated thy Church and Faithful in all Ages, inspire in me such sentiments of Devotion, as I most certainly know are necessary to the saving of my Soul, and without which I cannot but be hopeless of thy Favour. Kindle my Heart, and let it be an Altar of perpetual fire, where all my Sacrifices may be spent, and from whence my Prayers may ascend as the Incense, and as the Evening Sacrifice.

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C H A P. IV.

That Devotion is exceeding rare, and neglected.

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THE Rarity of Devotion is an exception to that Rule, that says, *Things rare are always much valued.* There is nothing rarer in the World than true Devotion, yet nothing more neglected. Men do not offend in this Point through Ignorance; they very well know, that without a devout Disposition it is impossible our Prayers should please God. But yet 'tis hard to express the fearful Negligence with which Men do this Exercise of Piety, as well as all the rest. They come to it with a prodigious Slowness; 'tis plainly Custom and not Inclination draws them to it; 'tis fear of Blows and Punishment that makes them march like Slaves, as to a Work of Pain and Difficulty: 'Tis what we do against our Wills, and as little of it as is possible. If we steal a Quarter of an Hour from the

the World, to give it to God, we persuade our selves presently, we are excellent good Christians: When we are at Prayers we make all haste to have done quickly, as tho' 'twere something troublesome and inconvenient to us; and when we have done, we think we are at Ease again. Can that be well, that is done thus? Or how can we pray to God as we should, when we consider not what 'tis we are to ask? When we would pray, we ought to represent to our selves with all respect and lowliness the Majesty of him, before whom we are to appear; so that we come not thither in an hasty inconsiderate Way, as tho' we were to speak to some mean Man. If we observe it well, the Body is upon the Mountain, when the Heart is yet in *Sodom*; the Mind is wandering round the World, and roaming even in imaginary Spaces, diverting it self with fanciful and empty Speculations. The greatest Part of us turn our Prayers over our Tongues, and let them run like a Stream, but the Heart has little or no Share in them; and if it has, the Impression is so weak, that

that within a Moment's Space it perfectly disappears. And should we when we rise from our Devotions, but examine if our Faith, our Hope, or Charity have received any considerable Increase, we should be certainly confounded with Shame; but alas, we think of nothing less than such Enquiries; we run immediately where Interest or Pleasure calls; and think no farther on the Duty. 'Tis certain that the greatest Part, after their Prayers, may find their Conscience in a worse Condition than before; so that this Examination instead of producing Peace, should augment their Disquiets; and if their Prayers be indevout, what are the rest of their Performances? If when we hear the Word of God, we give any Attention, 'tis rather to the way of speaking them, than to the Things themselves. If the Preacher hath not the Gift of pleasing, we do not hear nor edify at all; there's nothing, we say, that can keep us awake, and then we think we may sleep the Sermon out without so much as hurting the Conscience at all. And thus we
speak

speak to Men that are deaf, and our Churches from whence we have banish'd Images, are yet fill'd with Idols, *that have eyes and see not, and ears that hear not.* The Preacher seems to have *Medusa's* Head in his Hands, that when he appears turns all to Marble; and the Word of God is a Charm that maketh Stones of *Abraham's* Children, instead of making *Abraham* Children out of Stones. A great part of Hearers remember nothing else than what they think the worst, to furnish Matter for their Censures or profane Wits; an excellent Thing is quite neglected, but an unlucky One is soon recovered; that is, in a fair Field richly adorned, they gather here a Thorn, and there a Leaf, and overlook the Flowers and Fruit. Those that do least evil in this way, hear, and would fain make good use of what they hear; but 'tis alas but an imperfect Will, that does not long abide, but almost ends together with the Sermon. But oh, what Indevotion, and what Coldness is there not, in partaking of the Lord's Supper, that venerable Sacrament

crament wherein Christ distributes to us his Flesh to eat, and his Blood to drink! Piety is not now divided into a croud of different Services and Worships, as it was heretofore under the Law, but is reduc'd to two or three Ceremonies, and to one Sacrament for grown-up Persons. We should therefore recollect all our Devotion upon this Occasion, and give to this sole Gage of God's Love, all that Zeal and Ardor that the *Israelites* were oblig'd to shew in all the several Services commanded by the Law. A Flame that's scattered burns but little, the Rays of the Sun at large, heat but indifferently, but when collected in the Centre of a Burning-glass, they burn up Wood and melt down Metals. It would be so if our Devotion could unite in this Divine Object, it might consume all our Vanities, and melt down all the Ice and cold Affections of the Soul; if we were but truly devout in the Participation of this holy Sacrament, our Faith would penetrate through all Appearances and contemptible Outsides, to contemplate on, within, the broken Body of the Son of

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of God, and all the Myſteries of our Salvation. But here we ſtop at what we ſee, and come as it were to an ordinary Meal, and bring our Indevotion thither, and carry nothing thence but Condemnation.

By what we ſee in Publick, we conjecture at what is done in Private; and 'tis a hard matter to judge favourably of the Devotions of the Cloſet, when there is ſo little Reaſon to be ſatisfied with what we ſee in Churches: If nothing is done for glory and the pleaſure of being approved and praized; to what Degrees will not Zeal relax, when there ſhall be no Witneſſes at all? Let us not then be thought to violate the Rights of Privacy, if we ſay that private Devotions are more careleſly perform'd than publick Ones; for without doubt he that ſleeps at Sermon will hardly keep awake at ſimple Reading, where the Words want Sound, and Voice, and Tone to hinder Men from ſleeping. But every Man on Earth ('tis ſaid) has his Faults, and all Conditions have their Failings. The Tradeſman is for Gain, and covetous,

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tous, and oftentimes a Cheat: The Courtier is ambitious: The Magistrate is corrupt: The Poor impatient; and the Rich ones proud. But we may say, that Indevotion is the fault of all *Professions* in the World; and one would say of all *Men*, if by the Grace of God there were not yet some good Souls, that sigh in Spirit for the evil State of others, and themselves, that pour out their Sorrows before God with abundance of Zeal, and that delight in his Sabbaths and Service. But alas, how rare are such Examples! it may be we shall hardly find ten such as these in *Sodom*; and since Exceptions overthrow not Rules, we cannot but cry out on this our Age, as on an Age of Ice and Iron.

MEDITATION.

I am called to examine other Men; I see very well that Devotion is very rare in the World. This ought to trouble me exceedingly for the share I have my self in God's Interests. This ought to terrify me not a little, that the whole World become
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not Universal Sodom, or be made like Gomorrha; and God should pour his Vengeance on it, in Deluges and storms of Fire and Brimstone. But there is something touches me more near, and that is the rarity of Devotion in my own heart: This wretched Heart is Ice and Marble all over. How is it possible it should remain insensible amidst so many Objects that are capable of moving it? How can it prove unthankful, when encompassed with so many of God's Favours? How is it, that it does not tremble before him, whose presence even the Angels tremble at? How is it, that my Soul, so thirsty and so destitute of all good Things, should not with ardor hasten to that pure refreshing Spring? I cannot draw one tear from out my Eyes, nor one sigh from out my Heart. I every Day present myself before him with dry Eyes, with my Body in an humble Posture, but with a Soul all Pride, and oft with such an air of Negligence, that even the tone of my Voice, my Actions, and in general, all that is visible speaks out my Indevotion. How often have I quarrel'd with my Heart, and said within my self, Oh wretched Heart

Heart, why dost thou not tremble within me? Why art not thou afraid of him, whom thou canst never fear enough? Why dost not thou love him infinitely, who infinitely hath lov'd thee? Didst thou but fear and love this thy adorable Creator as thou should'st, whom all the Angels love and fear, thou never could'st be cold in his Service, nor worship in so faint and languishing a Manner.

P R A Y E R.

* Thou seest, alas, my God, thou seest, how I lament and sigh beneath the burthen of my corruption and my ind devotion. Ah help me to rid my self of them, to the end the motions of piety and zeal thou lovest so dearly, may be as frequent for the time to come, as hitherto they have been rare. Let them no more resemble those poor sparks that rise at a great distance from an heap of Embers that are now cooling and extinguishing: But let them be as those pure Flames that burn continually, even in the midst of Waters, and may withstand the storms and tempests of Temptation

tation, of Corruption, and of Ill-examples ; instead of suffering me to be born away by the floods of corruption and indevotion that flow even in the sanctuary it self: Let my Piety shine forth, I pray thee, as a bright Lamp amidst the darkness of this World.

C H A P. V.

That Indevotion is a greater Fault than we think for.

I Speak not of the Indevotion of the Profane, but of theirs that would be call'd God's Children. I speak of those Negligences, cold Distractions, and vain sensual Thoughts that cross their Exercises of Devotion. That which makes this Fault so common, is, the Opinion Men have, that 'tis so very small, and so inevitable, that 'tis not needful to take any great care to hinder or prevent it. There is nothing but is said and thought on to excuse and flatter one's self in this fault. We say 'tis the Nature of the Soul to be active and stirring,

stirring, that it cannot fix upon one Object, that Thoughts fly out and vent themselves, then, when we think to hold them strongliest in; It is, we say, the Distemper of the Soul, and which it is not to be blamed for. Now though it were an Evil altogether involuntary, yet sure it were but reasonable to deplore our Misfortune in that it is so: 'Tis certainly a Mark of an irregular Soul, and a Proof that Sin hath caused terrible disorders there. If you should see a Man, in the midst of a Discourse full of good Sense, break out upon the sudden, and say a thousand Extravagancies, you would say undoubtedly his Mind was mightily disorder'd; and is it not a Proof the Heart is so too, when you perceive that it is carried off amidst its devout Thoughts, and all upon the sudden rambles from its Subject. and it self, to lose it self in a thousand wild Chimerical Imaginations? But besides all this, there is a Fault as well as a Misfortune in this Mischief; 'tis enough to know that Sin is the Cause of this Disorder, to rest assur'd that there is Sin in

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having and in suffering it. The Production of so criminal a Cause cannot be innocent. I own, that the lower Part of the Soul, corrupted by Sin, is like the Fenny-grounds, where Vapours rise continually, and are sometimes so thick that they obscure the Sun it self. Our Passions, it is true, raise Clouds of vain and evil Thoughts, that hinder us sometimes from seeing our great Sun of Righteousness. But what then? Does it follow hence, that this is no great Evil? All other Crimes flow from this Source, but are they therefore the less Crimes?

We imagine that the Mind of Man cannot fix, but this is false, and a thousand Experiences convince us it is so. Were you to plead before some Mighty Prince in behalf of your Life, you would think so steadily thereon that you would think of nothing else, and when you spoke would suffer no Distractions. When a covetous Man is counting up his Monies, he will hardly hear you when you knock at his Closet Door. A Man that is taken up with some important Business, and has set his Heart

Heart thereon, finds no such wild Distractions of Imagination. In a Word, we can sit whole Days attentively to hear a Comedy, or somewhat else we like as well. It will not therefore be so hard, would we but try in right good Earnest, to put a stop to this Lightness of Spirit, of which we complain, as tho' it were an Evil incurable. But in this Vice of Indevotion, there is a certain Pride of Heart that will not suffer us to be thoroughly humbled before God, before whose Presence universal Nature trembles.

I would fain know if a King would take it well, that in doing him Honour, a Man should turn his Back upon him, and do him Homage with an air of Disdain? Yet this is that we do continually to God. We do not give him half our Hearts. Can it be thought a little Sin, to despise and neglect Him whom the Angels worship? *The Lord is King, let the Earth stand in awe*, is what we seldom think, or say to our selves; and because God does not speedily avenge the Outrage done his Majesty, we get

a Habit of neglecting him, without concern or fear.

Were there no other Thing in Indevotion, but the Crime of Disobedience it were enough to make us worthy of the severest Punishment. We know very well, that God commands Respect, Ardor and Zeal ; we cannot but remember, we are called upon, to take the Kingdom of Heaven by Violence ; we hear say every Day, *he spews the lukewarm out of his mouth* ; we read everywhere, that the Life of the Faithful ought to be a swift Race, and no slow Pace ; and we know he would have eaten up with the Zeal of his House. Yet to the Prejudice of all these Orders if not in their Defiance, we are disrespectful, cold and languid, Ah, who shall be obey'd, if God is not ? He who maketh the Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flaming Fire ; he who hath many Means to avenge him of his Rebels, and recompence the Obedient, and whose Commands are always just, and always holy !

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Tell me not then, this Want of Application to the Exercises of Devotion, is a slight Fault, it is a most assured Proof we love not God. 'Tis not at this rate we pursue the Things of this World. *Seek for Wisdom as for Silver, and search for her as hidden Treasures, with all diligence,* says the wise Man. Oh, would to God that we could make a Change of Thoughts, and give those to this World which we have for heavenly Things, and those we have for heavenly Things, unto this World. Is it not a Crime, do we think, not greatly to abhor the refusing God that Ardor and Attention, and Engagement that we have for the Things of this Life? A Fault that deprives us of God, is no slight Thing; a Fault that robs us of the divine Consolations is not to be neglected or despised. 'Tis by this Fault it comes, that we so little feel the Sweetnesses that are in true Devotion, because that *God will not be found except of those that seek him,* nor gives those Heavenly Consolations but to such as ardently desire them, and that pant after them,

them, *as pants the Hart after the living Brooks.*

But let us presuppose with these Consciences that flatter thus themselves, that these Distractions and these Languors of Devotion are but Sins of Infirmary, and consequently such as shall not be severely punish'd, yet what shall we say to their Number, and our every Days Relapses to them? Shall this too go for nothing? *If thou despisest Sins for being small, yet be afraid because they are great in number,* saith St. Austin: altho' they should appear light in the Balance of the Sanctuary, yet the Sum will undo us. For 'tis the Work of every Day. There is nothing smaller than Grains of Sand, yet if you heap them up, they make a Hill; Step by Step we go to Hell, 'tis no great Matter then, what 'tis that leads us thither, whether one mighty Sin, or abundance of little ones; one is nevertheless damned. The *Ægyptians* that had nought but Frogs or Flies upon them, were notwithstanding brought to the last Extremity. Then let us not call those Sins small, that without God's
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gracious Pardon, will precipitate the Offenders down to Hell. But let us say with *Anselm*, *It may be thou believest some of thy Sins are small. Oh would to God, that our severe Judge would think them so too;* but does not every Sin dishonour God by Disobedience? How is it then that we call those Sins but small that offend so great a God? O dry and useless Tree, fit for eternal Flame, what canst thou answer at the great Day, when thou shalt give an Account of every Motion of thy Eye, when all thy Life-time shall be put in a Balance, and thou shalt be demanded how thou hast employed it every Minute? Then shall thy Process be made for every Thing that did concern thee, not only for thy Words, but also for thy ill-tim'd Silence, and thy least Thoughts shall be examin'd; thy Life it self shall become part of thy Crime, if 'twas not liv'd to God. O lamentable State! How many Sins shall then proceed, from whence thou now seest none at all! They shall take thee unprovided, and as it were in Ambuscade, and then they shall appear

pear more terrible and more in number: The Things thou thinkest now no Evil, or that thou thinkest good perhaps shall then appear both black and frightful. *This Difference*, says S. Basil, *great and small Sins is never found in all the New Testament, one Sentence pronounced against them all; He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin; and we give our selves the Liberty of distinguishing betwixt great and little Sins it ought to be in this sense, that there should be a great Sin by which we are overcome, and that a little one we conquer; as among the Wrestlers, he that fell was always thought the weakest and he that stood the strongest. The happy is the Man that possesses himself with this Fear, and rides himself of that strong dangerous Prejudice, that Indevotion is so light and pardonable a Sin.*

MEDITATION.

This is a meer Illusion, against which there is great need that I should fortify

my Heart. Ah! what an Inclination have I to flatter and deceive my self in my Sins, and to believe them little ones! Poor heart, thou art not sensible of thy disease, but thinkest thou art well, when thou art tending towards certain death; 'tis a most dangerous distemper that, to think that one is well when one is otherwise. Open thine Eyes, my heart, and see the danger thou art in continually. My sins do now appear but little ones, but they will one day appear great, as they truly are. Defer no longer then to acknowledge the greatness, and to feel their burthen and their weight, to the end I may have them at present in abhorrence, and for the future may repent in dust and ashes; for otherwise I may repent too late, and acknowledge my evil without finding a Remedy. I drink up sins, as Fishes drink up water, I see nothing frightful in them, because I am accusom'd to the sight, and I think them little ones because I compare them still with greater ones; and above all, I count my Indevotion and my Deadness nothing, because I persuade my self that God cannot be offended but by Impieties and Blasphemies.

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PRAYER.

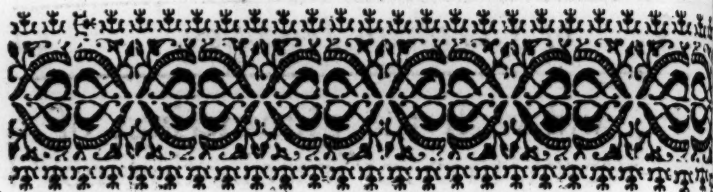
P R A Y E R.

This comes, my God, from hence that I conceive not thee so great as thou indeed art ; and I conceive not thee so great as thou art, because I see thee not. I tremble at the presence of a Man seated on a Tribunal with a scepter in his hand, and a crown upon his head, surrounded with royal pomp. I am afraid of him because I see him ; the Objects that strike my senses astonish my soul. I know that thou art set amidst the Cherubims, and that the Angels hide their faces in thy sight, and cannot bear the lustre of thy Majesty. I know that floods of fire roll fast before thy Throne to consume thy enemies. I know that neither humane nor angelick sight can bear the splendors of thy Looks, nor the flashings of thy Eyes ; and I believe these wondrous things, and see them not, and therefore 'tis, they make so small impression on my heart. I am sensible of nothing but things present: My eyes are more affected with the darkness of the Night

Night, and with the glimmerings of a Glow-worm, than my imagination mov'd with the light of the absent Sun that's shining in another Hemisphere. Draw back then, O my God, draw back this curtain from before my eyes, and let me see thy Majesty; redouble thou the light of my soul's eyes: Fill my imagination with the Ideas of thy greatness and divine Glory, that I may once persuade my self that I am certainly in fault when I present my self before thee, with but little reverence or regard.



SECOND



SECOND PART.



CHAP. I.

That Impurity of Life is the first Source of Indevotion.



HIS Indevotion is a great Evil, let us try to find its Sources out, to the end we may cut this Mischief at the Head. One of the Chief is Impurity of Life : There is nothing disorders the Heart so much as the habitude of Sin, nothing that quenches the Fire of Piety, like the foul troubled Waters of an unclean Life. Fire does not easily take hold of wet Wood ; Devotion does not easily fasten on vicious Souls. Devotion and Sin are incompatible.

able for several Reasons : One Flame extinguishes another, and the Fire of Lust stifles the Fire of Zeal, as the Flame of Powder puts out the Light of a Candle. Devotion is a certain Sprightliness of Mind that disposes us to approach to God with Confidence and Trust, but how should we obtain this Disposition whilst we continue in Sin? And is not this to offer up to God such Sacrifices as we know he has in abomination? For God, we know, will have no sullied and polluted Offerings; *Go get ye gone,* says he, *I hate your solemn Feasts; as for your Offerings of Rams, and the fat of fed Beasts, I take them as I do the price of Whoredom, as Swines Blood, and a Dog's Neck.* Alas! the purest Man is not yet pure enough to present himself before his God with good Assurance; and the Prophets themselves may say, *What shall I do, I am undone, I am a Man of unclean lips, mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* It cannot be, ~~but~~ that he who has not on the Marriage-Garment, but is sullied with the Impurities of the flesh,

should not be terribly afraid of him, before whom the Stars are darkness, and the Angels are not clean; and how then shall this Fear, or rather Horror, be consistent with Devotion, which is all Love, and all Assurance? *Let us go, says S. Paul, with boldness to the Throne of grace to obtain mercy in the time of need.* To present to God a Conscience full of Sin, is to carry our Witnesses along with us, and make our own Process, and deliver our selves into the Hands of Justice. We need not therefore wonder that a wicked Man is indevout, and that he flies God's Presence. But though Impurity of Life should do no other Thing but take away all Hope of having our Prayers heard, 'twould be enough to hinder our Devotion; all other Virtues are concern'd in this, and he that takes away their Hopes, takes away their Life also. How can a wicked Man then pray devoutly, that knows God will not hear him? *When ye stretch out your hands and multiply your prayers, I will not answer you, saith God, because your hands are full of blood.* Therefore

S. Paul

S. Paul would have us *lift up clean hands without wrath, and without contention.* And David says, *If there had been iniquity in me, the Lord had not heard me.* Therefore in another place he protests, *he will wash his hands in innocency, and so will he go to his Altar.* And why should God have respect to their Prayers, who have none to his Commands? Upon these Principles the wicked may well say, To what purpose should I present my self before God? My Sins have shut the Gates of Heaven upon me, and why should I ask any thing of him, that is resolved already to deny me? These would be but insignificant Devotions and Submissions, that, it may be, might but hasten Judgments on me, I could not have the face to ask for any thing, unless God first had promised it, but I resolve to hold to nothing, but to continue in the Way I am in. Devotion is of great Extent, it takes up all the Heart, it cannot stay in any Soul divided betwixt it and Ambition, Avarice, Violence, love of the World and Pleasures. If then you see sometimes a Worldeing that refuses

fufes nothing to his Heart, have his
fet Days of regular Devotion, nay
and sometimes break into Floods of
Tears and bitter Sorrows; conclude un-
doubtedly that thofe are Hypocrites
that would pay God with Looks, and
impose on Men with fair Appearances.
There are, it may be, fome that are the
Cheats of their own Hearts, and think
they are very good Men, when they ex-
piate for the Debauches of a Month
by one Days fasting. But they are great-
ly out, for true Devotion is not thus
unequal, nor full of fallies and irregu-
larities. It is not like the Floods in
Spring that flow with fury, but con-
tinue but a Day: Innocence of Life is
therefore of absolute neceffity to the
attaining true Devotion, and a neceffary
Preliminary. This Vertue is one of
thofe moft excellent Graces we receive
from Heaven, and one of the moft pre-
cious Gifts of the Holy Ghof; but 'tis
a Pearl that is not caft before Swine, 'tis
an Enamel only fit for Gold; a Favour
only communicated to privileg'd, that
is to fay, to pure and clean Souls, But
because

because we shall meet with this Subject again, we will not exhaust it here.

MEDITATION.

Who can express the evils and disorders sin hath brought upon the Soul? Who can cast up the miseries, in which the naughtiness of my Heart hath engag'd me? and amongst the rest is this, that it renders me incapable of Devotion. 'Tis sin hath made a separation betwixt God and me, and therefore I am dead, for God is my life, and my soul's Soul; I am blind and strayed from God, that is my Light: I am poor, being separated from him, for he was my Treasure and Abundance. I am naked, for he alone it was that clothed me: I am sick, for it was he, my ^U Son of Righteousness, that carries healing in his wings, that was my health and strength. 'Tis sin hath rob'd me of him, and eclips'd him from my sight, and I must languish out my Life, divided from him that was and is my Principle. And in this state, Oh how can I produce those vigorous movements of Devotion, that raise the Soul and

and carry it up as far as Paradise? Sin is that thick humidity that fastens on my Wings; a weight that overwhelms me that stops my Sallies, and makes all my Efforts and Attempts both vain and profitless. I feel in my Members a Law that fights with, and opposes the Law of my Understanding, and maketh me a slave to Sin, so that I cannot do even what I would of Good, but do the Evil that I would not.

P R A Y E R.

Sun of my soul! come, dissipate these clouds. Thou great Deliverer, come and break these bonds, open this prison, cause this vassalage of sin to cease and have an end. Thou art more pure than I am impure, more powerful than I am wretched, and more alive than I am dead. Withdraw me from this wretched state, this miserable nothing. Disengage me from beneath the weight of my corruption, that I may go with cheerfulness, or rather fly with swiftness to thee. *Pardon my sins, that they no longer*

longer terrify my soul, and fright me from thy Throne. *Stop* thou the course of my iniquities, that they may no longer hinder my prayers from mounting up unto thy Throne. Permit me not still to continuë making my self unworthy of thy favours, by abusing them, and grieving the Holy Ghost by my impurities of life. 'Tis he alone that can inspire this Ardor that I seek: He alone can make my soul devout, his presence only kindles my Affections, but will he deign his lights to so polluted and so dark a soul as mine? prepare thy self within me lodgings fit for such a mighty Guest, that he may come and animate me, that I may live and love thee, and may burn with the fire of thy love, and that of true Devotion.



C H A P. II.

*Of the Love of the World, the second Source
of Indevotion.*

ONE of the greatest Reasons why there are so few truly devout Ones in the World, is, that the World is too much belov'd; and this World's love is one of the most powerful Temptation that the Devil uses, to distract and turn our Hearts aside. This love hath pierced into our very inwards, and whilst it governs in our Hearts, how should the love of God come there? For Light and Darkness, Fire and Water, Life and Death, are not more incompatible than those two sorts of Love. *He that loveth the world, the love of the father dwelleth not in him.* And where there is no love of God, how shall there be Devotion for what is it but this same love that makes the zeal and fire of true Devotion? What is it but this love that creates those ardent longings after Union with God in the devout Souls? What is it else

that gives such pleasure in possession of him? 'Tis this that gives good Souls that readiness and chearfulness in serving God: 'Tis this that maketh all things easy to the Soul that loves. Now then as much as the love of God forwards Devotion, so much the love of this World hinders it; it quenches the devout Ardors, stifles good Desires, estranges us from God, takes away all relish of things spiritual, and steals away the Heart, and carries it away we know not whither. *Lot's Wife* was going towards the Hills, but still she had her Heart in *Sodom*, and thither turns her Eyes. The superior part of the Soul, that loves the things of Heaven, makes some efforts to raise it self to God; but the inferior part, where all the Passions reign, turns the Eyes towards the World, and withdraws the Heart from the Divine Commerce which it began to enter on with God. When *Rachel* left her Father's House, she took away with her his *Teraphims*: So when we leave the World and enter into our Closets, we carry with us all its Idols and vain Images, and those
unhappy

unhappy Thoughts that will be crossing
our Devotion. These are the Idols of
Gold and Silver, the Devil's Avarice and
Ambition, that pass and repass a hundred
times in a quarter of an hour to dis-
tract our Minds, and spoil us of Atten-
tion. Our Brains, when we come to
Prayer, are fill'd with a thousand Ideas
of good and evil things, Desires and
Fears, of Dangers and Distrusts, Hope
and Despair, Sports and Divertisements
with other vain Objects. And can a Soul
already thus possess'd give place to any
Images of God's Greatness, his Majesty,
Goodness, Mercy and Love? Can Faith,
Repentance, Charity, Zeal, Hope, Gra-
titude, and other Vertues that make up
or are any ways helpful to Devotion; can
they, I say, consist with the Movement
that the Commerce of this World in-
spires us with? We can hardly think of
any thing but what our Hearts are taken
withal: If we lov'd the World less,
would not so often return upon our
minds: We are charm'd therewith,
is a Spirit that we cannot find a place
of refuge against its Persecutions; the
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solitude and dismal Objects of the Desert cannot banish it. An Ancient tells us, That amidst his macerating Mortifications, his Imagination brought him in the Wilderness, a Troop of beauteous Maids, in jollity and dance. We must therefore employ all our Strength and Abilities to drain this fruitful Source, if we would be truly devout. *My little Children, love not the World, nor the things of the World.* We must crucify the old Man, if we would present our selves to God a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable Service. Thus one of the most useful Meditations, by which we may prepare our selves for Prayer, is this, of the Vanity of the World. 'Tis good to enter into ones self, to consider the shortness of human Life, the inconstant glory of the World that flourishes in the Morning, and at the Evening fades away. 'Tis good to say, and say again within one's Heart, what the Holy Ghost has said before. *All flesh is grass, and the glory of it as the flower of the field, the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth.* Thou carriest

carriest them away as with a flood, they are as a Sleep in the Morning, they are as Grass that groweth up. *The days of Man are as grass, the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. Man that is born of a Woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of trouble, he passeth away as a shadow that flieth, and cometh not again.* His Riches vanish, but his Sins abide; his Honours leave him, but his Torments never do. And, it may be whilst we cry out *Vanity of Vanities*, over this Heart infected with the putrid Air of this World, we shall chase away these worldly Thoughts, it may be drive those filthy Birds away that come to spoil our Sacrifice, and to devour that good seed of Piety, which the heavenly Husbandman hath sown there.

MEDITATION.

O wretched that I am! 'tis to great purpose truly, that I cry out *Vanity of Vanities*, over my heart infected with the world's love, since it becomes no whit the better

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better for it. I am sufficiently persuaded of every thing that's said; I know very well, that the World is made up of nothing but Appearances: I know very well, it covers all its gall and wormwood with a little Honey; I know very well, its pleasures are as so many Nets to ensnare the Soul, and drag it unto Death, but I know not how this knowledge takes possession of my Understanding, but makes no manner of Impression upon my Will. I believe, I see, and yet I do nothing. I see a thousand and a thousand People plung'd in the corruptions of the World, and led thereby to Hell. I see it is a mighty Enemy to Christ my Saviour, and that the first thing it attempts, is to remove from out their hearts the love of God, who have given up their Names to his Service. It is a wicked and a dangerous thing, I know 'tis so, but yet I cannot break those Bonds that tie me to it. I fly it, it pursues me, it catches me in every place, and I am never free. Oh my heart, make one brave Effort now at last, to break these cursed Chains, and to divorce thee from this Enemy. Say to him loudly, Get thee hence, behind me

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Satan,

Satan, thou art an offence. *Love of the World is an Enemy to the love of God, but so is God's love an Enemy to it.* O then, my Soul, receive into thy heart the love of God, that it may keep out thence the love of the World: Commit these Enemies, and set them once together, and take be sure that Party thou wouldest save, against the other thou wouldest quite destroy. Love him that loveth thee, altho sometimes he strikes as though he lov'd thee not. Hate him that hates thee, though he seem to love thee above all things else. Give to this ardent Lover, such a love as that he bears to thee, and merits from thee.

P R A Y E R.

But, oh my God, I neither can love thee, nor hate the World without thee. Pluck up this bitter root that's springing up, and would divert my growing up towards towards thee: Open mine eyes, draw the world's curtain up, remove the mask, and paint wherewith the world is drest and covered, that I may see its native ugliness, and learn to have it in abhorrence

abhorrence. On the other side, cause me to see thy face, and all thy beauty, that my Soul may be therewith ravished, and I no longer may pursue the world's vanities. Enrich me with thy goods, that my Soul may be fixed in the enjoyment of thy love. Then shall I run thy ways with all my might; then shall my soul be fill'd with that celestial fire, that never can be stop'd from raising up it self to thee, with all the ardor that one ought in reason to pursue the sovereign good withal. Then shall my soul in its Devotions be no longer troubled with the vain Idols of the world, nor with its Fantomes; but fill'd with thee, my God, and with thy love, shall have no room for any other passion.

C H A P. III.

*Of too great Sensibility of earthly Pleasures,
the third Source of Indevotion.*

THE love of the World is as a great Tree spreading into several Branches, which are as so many sources

of Indevotion. The first breach of this love, is a too great sensibility of earthly Pleasures. These Pleasures are of two sorts: The first are highly criminal, and are those we call the Debauches of the Gallants of the World; and of these it is certain, that not only an excessive sensibility, but even the least taste, is a mortal Enemy to Devotion. Spiritual Pleasures are of so different a relish from those of the Flesh, that one cannot at the same time love the one and the other. A Palate used to Gall and Wormwood, and that tastes no other thing, can never bear the sweets of Sugar and Honey. A Man that's plung'd into the pleasures of Sin, can have no gust or relish for the Joys of Heaven. There is another kind of Pleasures, whose Innocence the World maintains, because the Fault is not so visible: But as innocents as they either are, or may be, they quickly become criminal by their Excess. The continuation of Diversions (the most innocent) becomes an Abuse, and may become great hindrances to Piety, as little sensible as we are of the mischief. The

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holy Spirit is call'd the *Comforter*; and the Relish that the faithful find in Exercises of Devotion, are call'd *Divine Consolations*. But to what and whom are Comforters and Comforts given, but to the afflicted? In truth, those Souls that are so full of the Joys of this World, are not very fit to receive the Spiritual Consolations, and salutary Impressions of the Divine Comforter. 'Tis therefore Jesus Christ says, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*. And St. *Austin* said to God, *Thou art the only true, the only sovereign Pleasure, that art capable of filling a Soul; remove far from me these false Pleasures, and at the same time enter thou thy self into their place; thou who art sweeter, and more dear than all the Pleasures in the World, but not to Flesh and Blood*. The Manna fell not on the *Israelites*, but when the Provisions fail'd, they brought with them from *Egypt*. Surely this Manna of Divine Grace, these Ravishments and Joys of Devotion, are not communicated to those who are stor'd with
Magazines

Magazines of Goods from *Egypt*, and the Pleasures of the World.

A Person that returns from a Ball or Comedy, must needs be very ill dispos'd for Devotion; 'twill be to little purpose to say in favour of the Theatre, that it is now become chaste, and that we meet with nothing there, but Lessons of Vertue. They may say, if they will, that Passions are only display'd there, as animated in defence of Honour, and produce no other Sentiments but those of Generosity. For my own part, I say the Vertues of the Theatre are Crimes according to the Spirit of the Gospel; and though we may hear something that's good from thence, yet it is well-nigh spoil'd by the polluted Lips and Imaginations through which it passes. *O impious wickedness*, said *Clement of Alexandria*, *thou hast brought Heaven upon the Stage, and God himself is become a Comedy.* O impious wickedness, may I say too, in imitation of him, thou hast brought Vertue on the Stage, and made it look like a Comedian. Jesus Christ would not have his Preachers appear in

Trunkholes

Trunkhose, with Paint and Patches on their Faces. *Tragedy*, said *S. Cyprian*, *revives the ancient Sins in its Verses, lest they should die with Age*; we draw them from their Sepulchres of a thousand or twelve hundred Years standing. We reach the present Age, the Sins they might, perhaps, have never thought on; they think that what was heretofore done, may be done as well at present: And thus we make Examples of those Actions that had ceased from being Crimes and doing Mischief. And yet this is a Tragedy whose innocence may be defended best, and with the greatest Colour. The *Lacedemonians*, who were very wise, banish'd these criminal Amusements from amongst them, because, say they, it was not fit to violate the Laws even in appearance, but respect them even upon the Stage. And this puts me in mind of what *Cicero* said upon a time; *That it was not honest or fit for Philosophers or Rhetoricians to exercise their Faculties, though but in jest, against the existence or the providence of God.* We owe them this respect, not to divert
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our selves at their Expence. And I say the same of Vertue: It is not fitting to be pleased with seeing it, or play'd upon, or out-rag'd on the Theatre. But besides, these Spectacles are absolutely inconsistent with Devotion, because they fill the Soul with vain Passions, and we have need to have our Souls at liberty. They create real Joys and Sadnesses for imaginary Adventures; they fill the Mind with Images, and the Heart with Sentiments of Vanity, that quite destroy those holy Dispositions, that we would establish in a devout Soul.

It is the same with Play; 'tis a Madness that possesses Men like a kind of Devil. A man sees roll, as one may say, his life and death, his good and evil fortune in a little Box; he attends the throw with Inquietudes and inconceivable Transports; his Soul is agitated at the same with a thousand different Passions, of Fears, Desires and Hopes, &c. and his Heart is wholly out of its proper Station. Is such a man in fit condition to raise his Soul towards God? They would be fine Devotions, these

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these that are made after having sat up almost all Night, at Gaming. The Tempest hath been too long, and the Floods will roll a great deal longer: the Soul will be a great while before she recovers her breath again; and after all, the sweets of Devotion will not relish to his taste, because they are not those Pleasures, of which alone she is sensible. And hence it comes that young Folks are so seldom fit for Flights and Elevations of Devotion. They enter presently upon the World, and every thing appears beautiful, and carries with it the Charms of Novelty. They take long Draughts of sensual Pleasures, and nothing is agreeable but that which flatters Flesh and Blood that boils within their Veins. And hence it is moreover, that that Temperament of Blood, where the Sanguine prevails, which is the Temperament of Joy and Pleasure, is less proper for Devotion, than that which takes in somewhat of the Earth and Melancholy. The first is like matter extremely combustible, that takes fire at the first Spark; but the second is more difficult to stir,

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and is less sensible to that which charms the others, and that which enters deep into the one scarcely raises the skin of t'other. We must therefore draw Men from this Mistake; They fancy they can partake, and as it were, divide themselves between two sorts of Pleasure, those of Heaven and those of Earth; but 'tis not to be done. The Law puts in the number of unclean Beasts, all such as swim and fly, and live amphibious in two Elements of Earth and Water. 'Tis the Emblem of Worldlings. They swim continually in the Pleasures of the Flesh, and sometimes with feeble Efforts try to withdraw and raise themselves towards Heaven; but it happens to them, as it does to those Fishes whose flight is no higher than just to skin the Surface of the Streams with their Wings, and presently fall again into their usual Elements. *Rare and delicious*, says St. Bernard *is the Divine Consolation; it is a chaste but jealous Lady, that deserving to be only lov'd, will not bestow her self on him that runneth after Strangers.* 'Tis for

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this Reason *Solomon* cries out *Vanity* on all the Pleasures of the World, of which he had, to his cost, made a most sad Experiment; and for this Reason *David* does so oft declare, that he desires no other Joys than those of possessing God. *Leave all*, said *St. Austin*, and thou shalt find all; for every thing is to be found in God, by him that for the sake of God desires every thing. This is therefore one of the best Advices one can give to those good Souls that would dispose themselves to a devout Life. Renounce then, O thou Soul that would'st be good, renounce the Pleasures of this World, and chase the spiritual ones: Let reading of good Things delight thee more than the most sensual Joys do the most worldly-minded. Let the holy Assemblies and the Preaching of the Word divert thee, as the rest are diverted at their criminal Spectacles: Let Works of Mercy towards the Poor and Needy, be as sweet to thee as their vain Courses, Sports, and idle Conversations are to them; and if thou dost at any time relax, let Honesty and

rigid Vertue be the Directors and Measures of thy Pleasures.

MEDITATION.

Unhappy is it for thee, O my Soul, that thou wert born in Egypt, and art not sensible of the pleasures of true Canaan. therefore thou turnest thy Eyes so often on the World, and at the same time that thou should'st have thy Heart wholly in Heaven at the hour of Prayers, thou thinkest on the Delicacies of spiritual Egypt, that thou feddest on, when thou wast yet a slave of Hell. Thou hast not yet tasted the pleasures of devout and pious Souls, that say, I am satisfied as it were with Marrow and Fatness: I have tasted of the Goodness of the Lord; his Love is pleasanter than Wine, and sweeter than the Honey-comb. let him kiss me with the kisses of his Mouth: Oh would to God I had been honoured with those secret Commerces, with which my Saviour honours some great privileged Souls, that fill them with Joy amidst their Pains, and makes them sing in Prisons and in Fetters. Learn them

my Soul, learn then to seek thy pleasures and delights in God: He is the Spring of Joys, and all that comes not from him, ends in grief and sadness, in tears, despairs, and gnashings of Teeth. What dost thou wish for, oh my Heart? What dost thou hunger and thirst after? Dost thou love Beauty? God will give it thee, and thou shalt find it in him; by conversing with him, thou shalt become glorious and full of light. Dost thou love Life and Health? He is the Spring of Life, and in his Light shall we see Light; and he will give thee Life that shall be always healthy, always vigorous, and that is Life Eternal. Dost thou love Pleasures? He will make thee drink Rivers of Pleasures, and make thee glad with Wine prepar'd by the Divine Wisdom, that saith, I have mixed my Wines, I have slain my Fatlings. He will cause thee to see Objects that will ravish thee; and make thee hear such sweet and charming Musick as the Consort of the Saints and Angels needs must make, when they are chanting out the Praises of the Eternal God. And canst thou then be sensible of the vain Pleasures of this World,

after thou hast receiv'd, or dost at least in hopes possess, such charming Joys and Pleasures?

P R A Y E R.

O God, my God, Divine Saviour, come thou and fill my Soul with those sweet Joys thou dost communicate unto thy faithful Servants. Give me the Bread that came from Heaven, the true Manna, and the food of Angels; make me once taste those pleasures, that extinguish quite all sense of others of this World, and take from me the relish of its diversions. Let thy Sabbaths be my delight, and let thy Word be sweeter than the Honey and the Honey-comb. Let Meditation on the good things thou preparest in Heaven for those that love thee, enchant me in such manner, that I may quite despise the world, and give my self entirely to thy service. Cause thou the Heavens to bow and come down to the earth in favour of me; enlarge my Heart, and make a little Paradise therein, and spread abroad such an abundance of the light of thy Grace that,

that it may come near the light of thy Glory. Cause thou thy streams to flow across this Paradise ; plant there the Tree of Life, and pour down such an affluence of good Things, that I may look upon, with the greatest contempt imaginable, the joys and riches of this earth ; and being seated on the Throne where thou hast plac'd my soul, she may consider all the Palaces on earth, as so many wretched huts and despicable cabins.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Cares and Perplexities of this World, a fourth Source of Indevotion.

ANother Branch of the Love of the World, and a new Obstacle to Devotion, is, the Cares and Perplexities of the World: Black and dismal Spirits, that frequently withdraw us from the Company of our Saviour Christ, to lead us amongst the Tombs, and walk us in the Ruins of our Fortune and our Greatness. There are in the World more miserable

miserable than happy People, so that this Temptation is at least as common as the foregoing one. We love this World exceedingly, and therefore when we lose it, heartily bewail our Loss. A Man whom contrary Winds have driven from his desired Haven, can't chuse but turn his Eyes that Way, and loses not the sight of it without an inconceivable deal of Trouble. If he would lay himself to rest, the Image of his Country, Wife and Children, and his Friends, return incessantly upon his Mind, and continue on his Grief and Pain. So an afflicted Soul that would retire into it self, and unite with God, sees in the midst of his Devotions the Images of his Misfortunes, that awake his Grievs, and draw him down from Heaven, to plunge him in the bottomless Abyss. These are the Wasps and Gnats, whose stings are sharp and piercing. While we are fixt to any good Work, and give our whole Attention to it, then come these Insects, and pierce so to the quick, that a Man cannot forbear to put out his Hand. These are the Rods with which the *Egyptian*

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ian Task-masters make us make haste to the Works of the Flesh, that Brick-making. These Task-masters are the Spirits that say as *Pharaoh* said, This People is lazy, and since they will needs serve God, double their Labours on them? and then they rouse those sharp and piercing Cares, awakening in one Man the Memory of a Suit at Law he lost, and in another's Mind the sad Estate of his Affairs, and the Downfal of his Family: In another the threatning of Disgrace, or Death of some beloved Person. And then these Thoughts, like so many sharp Points, hasten the Man to return to his gathering Straw, his worldly Occupations, that quite take off his Mind from God. If then we would repose our selves in God's Bosom, we must drive away these buzzing Creatures from our Ears, and slay these cursed busy Spirits. And as the Spouse says, *Ye Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the Hinds and Roes, that ye stir not, nor awake my Love until he please.* So we must say, Be gone vain carnal Thoughts, Cares of this World, ye piercing Cares; be gone ye cursed Spirits,

rits, return to your Abyſs, and leave my Soul at reſt, diſturb and trouble not my holy Converſations; withdraw me not from my beloved's Arms, in whoſe ſweet Company is all my Joy and Happineſs.

There are good Remedies againſt this Temptation, if we will but make uſe of them: The firſt is, to rid one's ſelf of the Love of the World; if we love it no more, we ſhould be ſenſible no more of the Miſfortunes that happen to uſe from it. Let us leave loving Money, and ſee whether Riches, Honours, or the loſs of them, can touch us. Let us but ſet our Hearts on God, and we ſhall always be content, for we can never loſe him. The World makes us pay Inter-eſt for its Pleaſures; the Grief it cauſes when it leaves us, is greater far than the Pleaſure we found in its Poſſeſſion; and therefore we muſt leave it in good Time, that we may loſe it quite without much Trouble. If we have any reaſonable and lawful Concerns, and which we cannot rid our ſelves of, let us follow *David's* Counſel, *Commit thy care unto the Lord, and he ſhall bring it to*

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to pass. We want no Examples to support this Confidence and Trust: We can produce an *Elias* in the Wilderness, whom the Ravens fed; a Prophet in the Lion's Den, whom those wild Creatures had Respect to: The *Israelites* in barren and uninhabited Countries, on whom the Heavens rain'd down Bread. Have we need of Assurance? See then the Promise of our Lord; *the Sparrows fall not to the ground without your heavenly Father; the very hairs of your head are numbered, ye are of more value than many Sparrows; the fowls of the air have neither barns nor granaries, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.* Will God, that hears the Ravens crying, forsake you? Sure we must have a mighty share of Unbelief, to distrust so great and many Promises. And after all this, let us remember that our Concern and Cares change nothing in the State of our Affairs; but only overturn our Souls as it were, and make them incapable of Devotion. Therefore our Lord would have us take no Care, even for to Morrow, for fear it should disturb the

the Devotion of this present Day. When therefore we enter into our Closet, we must say to our selves, why dost thou trouble thy self about so many Things when it may be thou shalt die to Morrow? Thou art afraid to want Necessaries, but little thinkest that these Necessaries are but very few. Thou hast had some Losses already, and art afraid of more; but this is it, that God is retrenching thy Superfluities. After all this, how canst thou fear to want, when thou art just a going to find thy God, to whom all Things belong? Say with *St. Austin*, *Throw thy self, my Soul, into the Arms of God, and do not fear that he will suffer thee to fall, for his arm supports both Heaven and Earth.* And when thou hast thus said, shut fast thy Door, and put these Cares and Trouble under thy Feet, and fall upon thy Knees.

MEDITATION.

*Alas ! I have great reason to lament ;
Oh that my head were a fountain, and
mine eyes two streams of tears, to bewail*

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my sins withal; the sorrow I should have
is a godly sorrow that worketh repentance
not to be repented of: But I alas have
none at all. My eyes are dry and unre-
lenting as a rock. Moses his rod must
strike me, and the terror of God's judg-
ments must seize me, ere I can break forth
into floods. But yet I want not tears to
grieve for my disgraces, and what the
world calls misfortunes. I am not at all
sparing of tears, but I bestow them ill.
Why art thou so troubled, O my soul, at
the loss of those things of which thou art
not to have the use, and from which death
will undoubtedly hurry thee away? Dost
thou not know the world and fortune are
of glass? They shine, but they are very
brittle, a little blow breaks them, and makes
them fly to pieces: Why should'st thou find
it strange then, if this Glass should break
between thy hands? Why art thou then so
sensible of injuries and wrongs? And why
dost thou make another's malice and ma-
lignity thy misfortune? Why dost thou then
bemoan so bitterly the loss of those whom death
deprives thee of? they were not thine, but
God's, who lent them thee, and takes them

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now again? And why art thou so prodigal of tears, from which thou canst reap so little fruit? This is to employ one's labour for that which nourisheth not. When thou bewailest thy misfortunes, thy tears do not make those misfortunes end; but bewail thy sins, and they will be thereby destroy'd; they will make a stream, that will carry them away, and they shall be no more. Thy carnal cares and perplexities trouble thy Devotion, but the grief thou shalt shew for thy sins and infirmities, will increase thy piety, and God shall comfort thee.

P R A Y E R.

Descend then, O thou spirit of consolation, that hast been promis'd from the Father by the Son. Come sweeten thou my bitterness of soul; come recompence me for my losses by thy riches: come render me those joys that pass all Understanding: Come give me Piety, that I may have content of mind, that one and the other join'd together may be to me great gain, and make my sovereign happiness: Come set my soul in so firm

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a station, that it cannot be shaken by the rudest shocks: Come give me all that I have lost, my goods, possessions, houses, husband, wife, my children, father, mother, kinsfolks, and dear friends: Give me my self, and thou wilt give me all that was taken from me. Come, O my Saviour, let me perfectly possess thee, that thou may'st be to me instead of every thing besides. The world hath taken from me all it gave; but cannot rob me of thy presence. I make thee here an offering of all I have, and all I have not; if I have not lost them for thy Name's sake, yet at least I suffer patiently their absence in compliance to that resignation and obedience that I owe thee. Therefore I hope thou wilt reward me, as though I had lost them for thy sake. And in this hope I banish hence all cares, that they may trouble my repose no longer. O my God, grant that the Walls of this my closet may be impenetrable ramparts against the darts of my pursuing enemies: So that I may be in thy presence, as in a peaceable and quiet haven,
freed

freed from the storms and tempests, that disturb and drive me up and down; and that the commerce of my soul with thee, may not be broken off by the remembrance of my misfortunes: Oh make me quite forget the evils and the sorrows I have suffered.

C H A P. V.

Exceeding Multiplicity of Affairs, a fifth Source of Indevotion.

THIS is another Branch of the Love of the World, and another Hindrance of Devotion. We love the World, and give our selves entirely to its Affairs. One is employed in Merchandise, and thinks of nothing else: Another's busied in another's Business, and makes it his own for Interest; he pleads, as is said, in the behalf of Justice, but it is often in behalf of Sin; and whilst he gains his Cause, loses his Conscience. The Physician visits his Patients, with design to make them pay dear for his Service.

Service. A Man of Business is always casting up his Accounts. The Artisan exercises his Art; the labouring Husbandman his Tillage. And thus the better part of all Mens Time is spent; and the World is so corrupt, that we think these Men deserve Commendation for their Diligence, because it is one of the most innocent ways of losing Time; but for all that, 'tis criminal when it steals our Hearts from God, and relaxes our Devotion. The Mind of Man is so contriv'd and made, that it cannot vigorously tend to more Things than one, or earnestly desire them. So that if a Man bends the Ardor of his Desires, and the strength of his Inclinations, towards his Family and Trade, God, for his share, will have but the relicks of the Soul, and faint and languishing Desires.

I pretend not that Persons of all Conditions should give up themselves entirely to Contemplation. That kind of Life is proper only to the Angels, and not to Men. And since one half of us is Bodily, we must think to live a Life that is partly bodily. A Bird, be it never so

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strong, yet cannot always be upon the Wing; nor has a Soul sufficient force to be continually soaring towards Heaven. I know moreover, we must serve the Necessities of Nature: In a Word, I oppose not my self to that Decree, that Man receiv'd from God, to eat his Bread in the sweat of his Brows, and labour six Days in a Week. I only would desire, that *Martha's* Business might not hinder *Mary's*, nor that the Body which is our least part should carry away the best and greatest Portion of our Time. If we have any thing wherein to praise God's gracious Condescension to us, 'tis on this Occasion. All our Time is his, but he gives us six Parts in seven: *Six Days shalt thou labour, but the seventh Day is the Sabbath.* And since he is so bountiful, we ought to be exact, in paying back to him this Tithe of Time, one Day in seven, and one Hour in seven; six Hours should not pass without returning to our God, to offer him the Seventh. If you do more, you will not do too much, since 'tis to him we owe it all.

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Why should you not observe the same Measures, in respect to the Soul, as ye do to the Body? You give that Rest and its Repasts, and break off the most important Affairs you have, to repair its lost Spirits and Strength. Take heed the Spirits of Grace be not too far spent. Recal the Soul to its Exercises of Devotion, as to Repasts, to make it strong and vigorous; and as to a Sleep, during which it is gently laid in God's Arms, and fill'd with blest Ideas, and with pleasing Visions. We must, I say, oft labour for this heavenly Recollection, and withdraw the Soul from the wandering Courses it is taking over human things.

The running hasty Banquets are attended with Indigestions, and afford little or no Nourishment; and therefore we sit down and rest at Meals: And can a Man then think to serve God whilst he is doing somewhat else? These turbulent Devotions are the evil Banquets that oppress and overcharge the Soul, rather than give it any Nourishment or Strength. We must therefore take off our selves in due time from our ordinary Affairs, that

our Souls may retire into themselves a to a Port, there to enjoy a Calm after a Storm. Whilst the Water is in Motion it can neither well receive nor reflect the Image of the Sun. So a Soul in continual Agitation, cannot well receive the Impressions of Grace, the Rays of Jesus Christ who is the Son of Righteousness nor the Image of the great God. Thou troubled Sea, impetuous Soul, keep thyself still, stop thy Waters, that they may be Heaven's Mirrour, that all its Light may penetrate, and be drawn out of thee. *How can the knowledge of God enter into a Soul that is already taken up with a croud of carnal thoughts?* One must be Master of himself and Time, to give one's self to God. Pharaoh well understood this thing, when he said to the Israelites, *that which ye say, Come let us go and serve our God, proceeds from hence, that you have nothing else to do.*

God, I confess, loves not the slothful and how should he love an idle Life when he will punish every idle Word. But neither does he love those that are

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too much busied. Martha, Martha, *thou art cumber'd about many things, but Mary hath chosen the better part*: She was not busied about *evil* Things, but about *too many*: She did a good Work even in what she then did: She serv'd our Saviour, and prepar'd him Meat and Drink. If there could be Excess in those innocent and charitable Occupations, that hinder Men from coming oftner to their Lord, what shall we think of the Business of this World at large? How many Persons must there be excluded from the sacred Festival of our Lord, and from his Marriage-Feast, and of what sort? They shall be those that are busied; the one in buying and proving a Yoak of Oxen, the other in purchasing and visiting his House, and a third in marrying of a Wife. These Men shall find the Door shut; they found not time to come, when it was seasonable, and when they find their own Time, there shall no Time be found to open the Gate unto them. It shall be said to them, as well as to others, *Be gone ye workers of nothing, I know you not*. Let us not then

then say, To Day I must go to such a Place, to Morrow I must do this and t'other Thing, and after I will think on God. Ah my Soul, thy great Affair is to set thy self aright with God, and often to consult how he is disposed towards thee, to solicit his Clemency, and implore the Succours of his Grace; to pay thy just Homage, and bring him into thy Interests. This is the one, the necessary Thing: Chuse then this good Part, that shall not be taken from thee. *This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark.*

Let not the indevout then object the multiplicity of their Business. They that are most busied, can steal Time, to give to their *Pleasures*, and therefore may well take as much at least, to do their *Duty*. Let them not object the Goodness and the Innocence of these Employs; that cannot certainly be innocent, that keeps us back from God, and makes us blameable before him.

But what shall we say of those that make a Business of adjusting, or dressing the

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the Head exactly, and setting all things in great Order; that consult their Glass an hundred Times, that nothing be misplaced, and spend the best part of their Lives in these vain idle Occupations, and who can find no Hours in the midst of these to dedicate to Devotion? I say, they have a sad Account to give of all; of the Time they have so miserably thrown away; of their Beauty of which they made so bad use; of the unjust Division made between God and their Idol; since they have employ'd all their Lives in serving that, and given to God but some few Moments, of a precipitate and hurr'd Devotion.

M E D I T A T I O N .

Poor Soul, how unhappy art thou, to be oblig'd to serve perpetually, a body that renders nought but evil to thee, for all the good thou dost to it! Thou labourest after abundance of things, and runnest from one end of the World to the other: Thou venturest all the tempests of the Sea, and exposest thy self to its fury: Thy body is burnt

burnt by the scorplings of the Sun: Thou passest from the Icy Climates to the Torrid Zone: Thou rowest on the jaws of the deep whole Years together, to seek for riches, Gold and Silver, Pearls, and other fine things. If not this, thou dost what is not better, and takest as much pains to as little purpose, and all for a body that is but dust, and must to dust return again. 'Tis true, it is a burthen God hath laid upon thee, to take care of thy body, but thou dost infinitely increase that weight. The body would content it self with little, if thou wouldest serve it, as it should be served; and consequently it would take thee but a little time, whereas thou givest it all. What blindness and what madness is it? What will be the return of all these pains? The body for which thou takest them all, will not preserve the Riches thou hast gathered up, no, nor no more of them, than one poor winding-sheet, a coffin and about six foot of ground. Oh my Soul, 'tis on thy self thou should'st bestow thy thoughts and pains. Thou art a Queen and art become a Slave: Thou should'st be serv'd, and thou thy self dost vilely serve another

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another. Thou neglectest to heap up true riches; and therefore thou art poor, and blind, and naked, I advise thee therefore to purchase gold, and food and raiment of him, who says, Ho, all that thirst, come to the waters; come and buy wine and milk without money.

P R A Y E R.

O my God, make me to understand thou art the sovereign Good, the only Good, the only One that's worth the seeking for; the only One that's worthy to be lov'd; that I may run no longer after these vain shadows of glory and of grandeur. Make me to know what are the true goods, that I may give them all my love, and all my care; and may no longer make my application to the business of this world my greatest virtue. That I may use my body as a slave that is inclined to rebel; but may serve thee, as a Lord, whose inclinations are perpetually favourable to me; that I may seek first thy Kingdom and its righteousness, that all the rest may be

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added thereto. Let not my soul be unthankful or distrustful, or ever come to doubt his goodness who hath given so many tokens of his love and tenderness. How can it fear that thou shouldest let it want any thing, who furnishest the Raven his Food when his young ones cry unto thee, and unto the young Lions who couch in their dens? Alas, it labours for the things of this Life, as tho' 'twould last for ever, and neglects the t'other life as though 'twould never come. *Lord believe, help thou my unbelief.* Make me to understand the truth and excellency of everlasting Life, to the end I may neglect the present Life; that I may make such friends, as may receive me into everlasting Habitations; and may acquire such riches as I may carry hence along with me, and make choice of that good part, that shall not be taken from me.



C H A P. VI.

The sixth Source of Indevotion; the Custom of letting the Mind stray on different Objects.

I Think this is another Source of Indevotion, and especially of our Distractions. We cannot fix our Hearts whilst we are at Prayer, our Mind wanders, and our Attention is lost: Whence comes this? 'Tis from the evil Custom we have of letting our Fancy ramble; This is in Men, what Quicksilver is in other Metals: It rolls, and flows, and a little Fire makes it evaporate and vanish away, as it were, in Smoak, so subtle does it become. We permit it to do what it will, and it flies from East to West, from North to South, and from Heaven to Earth; and as though the Bounds of the Universe were too little for it, it flies beyond, and loses it self in imaginary Spaces. It cannot shut it self within the bounds of Time, but passes on to Eternity, enquiring what is done
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there, and what was doing, whilst there was nothing done. If it contains it self within the Universe, in this wide Space it flutters over every Thing, and glides upon their Surfaces, but penetrates into nothing. And as if the Creatures that are in being, were not enough to take it up, it fancies new ones, and imagines Fantoms and Chimera's: It makes Mountains of Gold, Worlds in the Moon, Centaures, and Hippogryphs, and those Movements are commonly so quick, that in less than a quarter of an Hour of this Visionary wandering, we are gone so far, that the ablest Man in the World, though he know our last Thought, shall never be able to divine what was our first. And after this, shall we ask whence come these wanderings of our Thoughts in the exercises of Devotion? How can we think, a Soul accustomed to wander thus, should fix and stop all on the sudden? 'Tis a Horse that never yet receiv'd the Bit, and hath done nothing hitherto but run, and leaped about in the Meadows, Day and Night, when you would put the Saddle

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on his Back, and the Bridle in his Mouth, he breaks away and throws his Rider, and returns from whence he came. When we would recollect our Soul, it scatters like a Flame abroad; it leaves us quite, and breakes the Bridle or Restraint of Piety, and before we perceive its first escapes, we find our selves plung'd deep in the diversity of vain Thoughts. *St. Austin* well discovered, what was the Cause of our Distractions. *Then, saith he, when our Mind is fill'd with Phantoms, and carries with it an infinite company of vain Thoughts, it comes to pass that our Prayers are troubled and interrupted; and that being in thy Presence, O God, we try to make thee hear the Voice of our Heart, and although it be an Action of such importance, yet 'tis travers'd and cross'd by some vain Images, that come I know not whence, to crowd in upon the Mind.*

If we have well understood the Nature of the Evil, we shall easily conceive the Remedy; Evils must be cured by their contraries. Let us learn to set bounds to our Imaginations; let us not suffer

suffer them to roam so far, that we may bring them back with the less difficulty; that is, to dispose our Hearts to Devotion, we must accustom our Minds to meditate on few, but good Things. 'Tis a Mercury that must fix, by applying to it Gold and Silver; a lively Faculty, to which we must apply both Bridle and Curb. But let us not think the Secret of curing this Distemper of the Soul, is to retain our Mind in the privation of all Thoughts; this is not possible to Nature, nor profitable to Grace. The imagination of Man is too active; it is impossible to keep it doing nothing; 'tis to kill it, this, to keep it without Employ; for Action is its very Life: God hath not given us Faculties so noble, to bury them in shameful idleness. And after all, if the Mind were habituated to think on nothing, we should at least have as much trouble to fasten it on the works of Piety, as now we have to reclaim it from its Wanderings and Vagaries.

From all this I conclude, that the Occupations of the wise and understanding Men

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Men of the World are, it may be, more destructive of Devotion than any in the World besides. The Eye is never weary of seeing, nor the Ear of hearing; and we are so far from reckoning these for Faults, that they pass for great Virtues.

Under protection of some great Names in Sciences, good Learning, curious Searches, sublime Speculations, Experiments, and wondrous Discoveries, we establish and set up in the World a Method of dividing the Soul with a distraction almost remediless: And would to God, experience did not give us abundance of proofs of this Truth. 'Tis certain and well known, the Atheists are not of the Ignorant, or Vulgar. The *Epicurus's*, *Protagoras's*, and *Diagoras's*, have still been learned Men, and great Wits; the Thing is passed into a Proverb. They say, That those who by reason of their Profession are oblig'd to study intently Nature and second Causes, apply themselves so strongly to them, that they quite forget to ascend to the first Cause. These Gentlemen, so know-
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ing in Antiquity, and that make such a Figure in the Empire of Learning for their understanding, make no great shew of Devotion in the Church.. 'Tis the study of holy Things only that can inspire an habit of Devotion. We see but too often, great Divines continue bad Christians, because they intend not their Labours to the Glory of God. They take pains only for themselves, and aim alone at their own Glory. I would never then advise the Man that would be truly devout, to take upon him many Things, nor burthen his Mind with Conjectures, and his Memory with *Maybe's*, of which that which they call good Learning is wholly made up. Besides that this false Science begets a habitude of Pride, the Enemy of Devotion, it inspires moreover a Spirit of *Pyrrhonism* and Doubt, that from Philosophy passes to Divinity; Because they find little or nothing certain in human Sciences, they take the same liberty to doubt of Divine Revelations; they accustom themselves to judge according to the light of Reason, condemning every Thing that does
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not agree thereto ; and are rash enough to introduce into the Church, that Principle they should have left behind them in the Schools.

I design not hereby to be an Advocate for Ignorance ; since we are all Citizens of this World, it is permitted us to make some enquiry into what is done there. But the Author of Nature, whose side we take, hath shewn us with what reserve we ought to proceed in the discovery of his Secrets. He hath let us see but the Effects, and hath hidden almost all the Causes ; which teaches us, that we may easily be without their Knowledge, since hidden Things are not for us. I don't know if a little Ignorance would not serve better to the glory of our Creator : If we understood but Nature as well as we would understand it, it might be, we should less admire its Author ; so unhappily are we form'd, that Ignorance in us begets Admiration ; it is certain we are wont no longer to admire the most excellent Things, when we see them too often, and when we think we thoroughly understand them.

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The desire of Knowledge deceives us, but let us take good heed of its Surprizes; the desire of knowing Good and Evil, as Gods, cost our first Parents too dear. Whilst they were good, they knew not they were naked; they got that knowledge, and a great deal of the like, by the loss of their Innocence: The knowledge of God alone should be the Subject of all our Labours, and that's enough to take up our whole Life. *Blessed is he that knoweth thee, and nothing else but thee, saith St. Austin; and wretched is the Man that knoweth all Things in the World, without thee; but he that knows both thee and all Things else, is happy, not because he knows those other Things, but that among the rest he knoweth thee!* O run not then, my Soul, after these empty Shadows of Science, or if thou runnest, run as after Shadows, not with so much love and application. Apply thy self only to Contemplate upon God; 'tis an admirable Object, and infinitely greater than all the Creatures put together; and yet this vast Object will not cause that dissipation and distraction that is inseparable

parable from the Contemplation of the Creatures. He is an infinite, but such a One that recollects himself in one Point; a Sun that unites his Rays in the bottom of thy Heart, to fill it both with Light and Flame. *Let the devout Soul, saith St. Basil, be as a Mirror and clear crystal Glass, that receives no Image but that of her divine Spouse. Let her continue wholly fill'd with this Image, to the end, that any foreign Things coming there, may find no place to set or shew themselves to our Imaginations. Thou everlasting Star, said another, Thou Source of all created Lights, penetrate to the bottom of my Heart, with one of thy Rays, that may purify and make me glad, that may enlighten, and quicken my Soul and all its Faculties, to unite them all to thee. If we would do a little Violence to our Minds, and stay them on this one and only Object, we should find the good we seek for, a Remedy to our indevout Distractions: And when we have for some time stopp'd this little evaporating Spirit by heavenly Meditations, as by Irons and Chains, it will become more grave*

grave, more solid and judicious; it will not escape us so easily; and as now when it flies from us, it lights into its wonted Paths, and falls upon its familiar Ideas; so when once these different Thoughts are become strange to it, by the little intercourse with them, the Mind will not easily be carried to them.

MEDITATION.

Let others understand the extent of their Spirit, and embrace abundance of Objects at a time! But shun thou diligently, O my Soul, this fault. Thou hast enough to take thee up, the Contemplation of thy God alone. In vain thou hopest to join the knowledge of the World with that of Heaven; thy Heart is yet too little for that God that is infinite, and hath no bounds; and if once thou fillest it with the Creature-Images, where wilt thou find a place for that of thy Creator? The Eyes of the Night-bird being accustomed to Darkneſs, cannot endure the brightness and the lustre of the Sun; and a mind always taken up in Contemplation of things corporal, cannot sustain

Sustain the Splendors of that glorious and original Spirit, that is the very Essence of uncomprehensive Light.

P R A Y E R.

O glorious and invisible Sun, who discoverest not thy Beauties but unto Souls that are purified from the vain Images of the World ; clear thou my Eyes by the purity of thy Rays : chase hence that darkness that hath seiz'd my eyes, and banish from my fancy vain Imaginations, that prevent my contemplating solely on the light of thy Truth. I know thee, O my God, because thou hast been pleased to shew thy self unto me, but that which I know, alas, what is it in respect of what thou art, or of what might be known ? I see thee darkly, and I form to my self an Idea of thy Essence and thy Majesty, that brings thee infinitely below thy self. I do thee this wrong, O my God, but I cannot do otherwise. I beg thy pardon for it ; I am sensible I do not conceive of thee as thou art, 'tis the fault of my Mind as well as of my Heart ; cleanse thou

thou mine eyes, that I may look on thee as vigorously as the Eagle looks upon the Sun. Let the knowledge of thy Beauty charm my Heart, and fill me so, that I may conceive a holy disgust for all that men in this World call good Letters, and deep Learning. Let me not stay in this circumference, but let all my views be directed towards thee the centre and the source, from whence proceeds all that is true and lovely in the world. Let it suffice me to see thee, in whom I shall behold all things besides that can be seen. Let my soul recollect all her strengths, and unite them on this only Object, to penetrate it, if it be possible. Aid me, O God, in this Design; make thy self visible, and let me enter into the bottom of thy mysteries, and into the secrets of thine infinite Wisdom; that I may neglect, as unworthy of me, all the curious Sciences which the men of this World so much esteem.

C H A P. VII.

The last Source of Indevotion; the Rarity and Interruption of holy Exercises.

I Acknowledge that the foregoing Obstacles are strong; that the love of the World, its Pleasures, its Perplexities, its Occupations, and distractions of Mind are Evils to which it is hard to find a Remedy; but not so hard if we would take more care and pains herein; for the most evident Cause of our Indevotion, is the rarity and interruption of our holy Exercises. It is certain, that spiritual Pleasures are most opposite to carnal Ones; and 'tis only rarity and difficulty make these sharp and uneasy; we lose the very taste of Pleasures in the frequent use of them, and when once they have lost the Grace of Novelty, they have lost their Value. This Beggar yesterday thought himself blest with a little Sum, but to Day he has found a great one, and to Morrow will be sensible no more of his Happiness. Make grand

grand Entertainments at a great distance and the Pleasure will be something ; but make them every Day, and the Pleasure of the Feast will end by becoming ordinary. But on the contrary, come often to God, renew your Commerces with him, and that which seemed at first insipid, will certainly become an Exercise of great delight ; come thither but seldom, and you will quickly lose the Relish. The Reason is not hard to find ; it is, that Piety and its Exercises become Labours, because of the criminal dispositions Sin occasions. Now Labour decreases by a continual Use. The Traveller is very weary at the end of his first Journey, to Morrow he will be less so, and the next Day his Labour will be proportion'd to his Strength, and within a few Weeks will become his Diversion. Let us bring our Souls by violence to God ; at first they will follow with great pain, they will think the ways both hard and sharp, but after a little while, the Toil will not be so great, but will change by degrees into Pleasure. Is it not true, that the less we do

a Thing, the worſe it is done? Vertues
 are Habitues; and though God gives
 them us, by infuſing them into our
 Souls, yet he gives them in the ſame
 manner Habits are uſually acquired;
 namely, by divers repeated Actions. As
 therefore a Man is not a good Soldier,
 for having been once at War; nor a
 Painter for having received two or three
 good Leſſons in that Art; no more is
 Piety acquired by ſome few Acts feebly
 reiterated, but by long and frequent Ex-
 erciſe. 'Tis a War in which we are to
 combat with our own Thoughts, and a-
 gainſt the hardneſs of our own Hearts:
 And if we be repulſed the firſt and ſecond
 Charge, we muſt instantly return again
 with freſh Vigour. Indevotion is a Mon-
 ſter we are oblig'd to deſtroy by little and
 little, becauſe we cannot kill him at
 one blow. This Day we muſt gain a
 ſtep, and to Morrow another; but if we
 ſuffer him to take the leaſt Breath, he
 will quickly recover what he loſt: And
 when we are come juſt to the conquer-
 ing him entirely, we muſt not ſlacken
 any thing of our diligence: for if the

L

rarity

rarity the Exercifes of Devotion hinder its progress, were it never so far advanc'd an interruption or relaxation will quite destroy it. It signifies little knowing perfectly any Art; if we don't practice it, we forget it. Especially when we combat against our natural Inclinations, to which if we yield never so little place we shall find our selves ready to take their part, a little after. Our Hearts are bent towards Sin, and especially towards Indevotion: Let it be never so well fortified, or confirmed with the best Habits in the World, one heated and disordered Thought, that crosses it will set it all on fire, and with the flames of Concupiscence stifle the flame of its Devotion; but if it catches thus the fire of Sin so easily, it is on the other hand, heavy and cold to all Devotion. So that after having with abundance of Art and Labour, and great Toil, rais'd it to heaven-wards, an interruption of a few Days will let it sink again into its old Abyss. And for proof of this, I desire no other Witnesses than the sincerely devout Souls. If some Affairs of the World

World, and some Impediments, which you call Insurmountable, have estranged you some while from the place of Devotion, and made you lose your Closet-hours; you are at first uneasie, but you insensibly accustom your selves to it, and when you have a mind to return to your good Practices, and exercise of Prayer, then you can hardly find your selves, and feel an inconceivable sloth and heaviness upon your Hearts. Conscience is like the Stomach, leave giving it any Victuals for a while, and afterwards it will desire none; stay a little longer, and if you give it way, 'twon't know what to do with it, it can digest no more, it will have have lost its natural heat, and all its Forces will be spent, and performing none of its Functions, it will let the body die. So Conscience loses its habits of Devotion, by leaving off its Operations, and the Soul dies in its Sins. In a word, Devotion is a Vertue that puts in motion all the Powers of the Soul, like the great Wheel of a Watch, it moveth all the rest in going on: without discontinuing, all will go easily; but if you

cease, the Wheels will run down, and all will be heavy and unfit for motion. Continue constantly the exercise of Piety, and the Soul will keep its Dispositions to devout Movements; interrupt them, and there will be a stoppage in the Soul, that will take away its facility of moving towards Heaven.

These are, I think, all the Sources of our Indevotion, and the Indispositions of the Soul, which must be mended and set right, before we can open the way to this excellent Vertue. We may find a great many others, I make no question, but they will throw us into too general Considerations. Who can doubt, for Example, that the Languors of our Souls come from the weakness of our Faith, of our Hope, of our Charity? Were we but strongly persuaded, that there is a God above that knoweth all our Thoughts, sees all our Ways, who calls himself the King of Men and Angels, who opens Heaven and Hell, should we not present our selves before him, with a Spirit of Submission and a holy Fear? But alas, we believe

believe in such a feeble manner, that we have great need of God's helping our Unbelief; to be pious, we only want to be believing, and therefore the Fathers have thought no Advice more useful to keep us from Distractions than this, to remember *our selves*, and call to mind, *to whom* we speak. And can we yet doubt, but that this slowness of Belief comes from the little love we have to God? Were we enflamed with the Divine Love, all our Movements would be made by the impressions of this heavenly Fire. In fine, if the hopes of Glory touch'd our Hearts but never so little, we should not move so slowly towards him, from whom we pretend to receive eternal Happiness. But I know not how we should reckon this amongst the Sources of Indevotion, since this want of Faith, and Hope, and Charity, are Indevotion it self.

To conclude, we must own, that we find in our selves, certain Indispositions of Mind, very often, of which we cannot tell the Cause. To Day we are all Heat, and to Morrow all Ice: A good Soul

Soul presses upon itself, rouses itself, and thinks on every thing that can enkindle its Affections, seeks for itself, but finds it not; examines its Conscience to find out its Offences that have disingag'd its Heart from God, and grieved the holy Spirit of Grace: She finds nothing she can accuse her self of, and knows not to what she can attribute this her Coldness. Whence come these Inequalities? It may be from the changeable nature of Man, that is never long the same. It may be the temperament of Humours in the Body, and disposition of the Air. As the Soul is Prisoner in the Body, and acteth by its Organs, and depends extreamly on the stirring of its several Humours, it is manifest, that Devotion depends in some measure on these Springs of Blood and Dust, which are so often out of order; it may be that the Devil hath found his Time, and sowed his Tares amongst the good Seed. In fine, it may be, that the Spirit of God, the Author of all good Thoughts, hath for some Season hid himself. This drench of Soul may come from hence, that
God

God hath shut the Sources and the Springs of Waters that rise up to everlasting Life. But be it as it will, this Evil does no little mischief to devout Souls. We can employ no other means to the curing it but Prayers and Tears. The Soul must say, Come, thou Lord Jesus, come, Sun of my Soul, dissipate this Darkness, cause the Morning-star to rise in my Heart: Why dost thou hide thyself, I seek thee in the Night-season, and find thee not: Open thy Fountains, that I may quench my Thirst, and be refreshed and satisfied; hast thee, O God of my Salvation.

* MEDITATION.

I do acknowledge my great Negligence: I take a great deal of pains, to do every thing well that respects this present Life, and take so little, to do the only and the principal thing for which I ought to labour, that 'tis hard to imagine it. To succeed in my Art, I exercise it frequently; I consult my Masters, I reflect on my Mistakes, to the end I may commit them

no more. But, Oh my Soul, thou takest not half this care in the exercises of Devotion: Thou dost them seldom; and commonly without any reflexion at all, and therefore dost them very ill; thou dost them seldom, because thou dost them without pleasure, and thou dost them without any profit, because thou dost them without any zeal or application: Return, my Soul, more frequently, return, and thou shalt find Pleasures and Joys unspeakable, and inconceivable.

P R A Y E R.

O my Lord God, my heavenly Saviour, open thou the fountains of thy Grace, and let those streams flow down to me. Make me sensible of the advantages of possessing thee, and of the pleasures that the enjoyment of thy heavenly goods will bring: that I may not drag my self so seldom, and with so much difficulty, to the Churches where thou speakest unto me, or to the closet where thou suffereſt me to meet and entertain thee. Draw me, that I may

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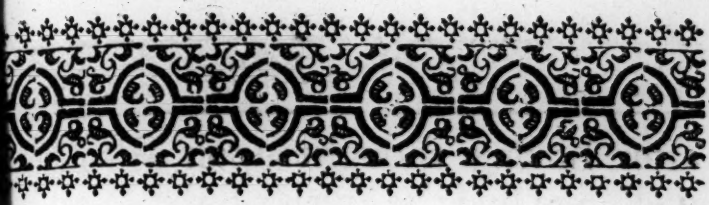
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run after thee; when I design to ap-
 proach thee by the actions of my Devo-
 tion, O do not thou withdraw thy
 self from me. *I know I am not worthy*
thou should'st enter under my Roof. It is
 not long since that my heart was a Den of
 thieves, and a rendezvous of cursed spirits:
 thou hast driven them away by thy ce-
 lestial Grace; but those uncleanly Guests
 have left the relicks of impurity behind,
 that make it an unfit abode for thee,
 and for thy holiness. But, O thou sun
 of my soul, whose rays cannot be sullied
 with the impurity of those places where
 they enter, pierce thou into my very
 inwards; carry thy fire within, and
 kindle in my heart the flames of thy
 love. If I am sleepy, waken me; if I
 fall into negligence, and come to break
 off my devotions, knock at the door of
 my heart, and if thy word cannot be
 heard, spare not to rouse me by Affli-
 ctions: Break me in pieces, rather than
 permit me to continue in my natural
 hardness; thy wounds will never break
 my head, but will be more sweet than
 precious balms. Come to my aid, O
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my Redeemer, that I may accomplish the victory over my infirmities. I am heavy and earthly, do thou make me spiritual and light. The movements of grace and devotion, that lift me up on high, are opposite to the movements of nature that drag me downwards. In this dispute I am rent and torn in twain; the corruption of nature has the insolence to oppose it self to thy Grace; and this contest causes the rarity of my Exercises of devotion. But, O thou heavenly Spirit make them easy and agreeable, that I may oftner return to them.





The Prosecution of the SECOND PART.

of Worldly-mindedness, and the love of Pleasure, the grand Source of Indevotion.



CHAP. I.

That Pleasure is a mortal Enemy to Devotion: What are the Sentiments and Maxims of the World, touching the Use of Pleasure and Delights.

E have examined the Springs of Indevotion; we have attempted to stop them; but amongst the rest there is one more lively, more open, and more fruitful in Impurities, and by consequence a greater Enemy to Piety, and that's the Spirit of the World; and

after having thought upon the Matter well, we find the Spirit of the World, is the love of sensual Pleasure. Experience shews us that this Spirit is such an Enemy of Devotion, that 'tis impossible to be animated therewith, and be truly devout: This continual Use of sensual Pleasures fixes the Soul so strongly to its Matter, that the Heart becomes incapable of Elevation. The closer Union we have with sensible Things, the more our Union with God diminisheth. We must therefore turn our greatest Strength towards that Side, and try to bring our Soul back to our God, and pluck it from that fast Hold it has taken on material Things, that it may apply it self to God and be wholly taken up with him; and therefore though our too great Sensibility of the Pleasures of this Earth has already had its Chapter; amongst the other Sources of Indevotion, we do not think we have said as yet enough on so great a Subject. The Monster is too dreadful to be combated cursorily and with Negligence: If we could rid our selves of this we should gain a compleat Victory;

if it continue Master, in vain shall we attempt to be pious And therefore I design in this Prosecution of the Second Part, to offer such Considerations as may, if it be possible, destroy this mighty Enemy of true Devotion.

It is certain that Man is born for Pleasure, since he is created to be happy, and that Happiness consists in the Possession of Good, and in the Sense of that Possession which causes Pleasure. The sovereign Good of Man consists in possessing of God, and being immediately united to him in a very intimate Manner; and that Pleasure, the Sense of which makes up compleat Happiness, must spring from this intimate Union with the Divinity: This Union is made, by Understanding and by Love; and the Pleasure arises from hence, that God applies to the Soul, whilst he embraces it, the Side of his Goodness, and his Beauty, and fills it with his Light, and spreads abroad his Joys and Comforts through it. Sin hath so infeebl'd this Union of the Soul with God, that it no longer tastes these Pleasures. *Your*

• *sins*

sins have made a separation betwixt God and you. And it hath made as it were a thick Cloud, that hides from our Eyes that Sun, whose benign Rays cause so much Joy in striking through us. The Soul hath preserv'd this Sentiment still, that she is born for Pleasure and Delight; so that when she is disunited from God, and depriv'd of the Pleasure of that Intimacy, she turns her wholly to the Body's side, and the closer she is united to it and its Pleasures, the farther she is from God: So 'tis the Pleasure of the Senses that disunites the Soul from God: as this disunion is properly that Indevotion which we fight and strive against; for most assuredly Devotion is the Movement of the Soul, by which it returns to its principle, and to the Enjoyment of those Pleasures that flow from an Union with God. Let the Men of this World take but the Pains to consult their Hearts hereon, and they will tell them, what we have said is very true; they will find the Reason why they could not dispose themselves to Prayer, to love and serve God, was, because they were possessed

possessed by their Passions, and enchanted by the illusions of Sense; that is to say, they are absolutely turn'd towards worldly Pleasures, and are wholly taken up by them. The Soul is straightned, the Mind is bounded when it is filled with the World and its Vanities; and we must not wonder, if God, who will have the Soul entire, find no Place therein.

In a Word, we shall undertake a very difficult Task to persuade those that will become truly devout, that they ought to renounce the Pleasures of the World. Though the Corruption be exceeding great, yet we may not place all Pleasures in the same Rank of Evil; we distinguish two sorts of sensual Pleasures: There are some we call Excesses, Enormities, and Crimes; the World, 'tis true, gives it self up to these, but dare not however undertake the Defence of them. Others there are which we call innocent Delights, such as Dancing, Play, Drinking, great Entertainments, Feasting, Theatres, Shows, and passionate Discourses, Parties, Commerces of Gallantry, and such Intrigues as are introductions
to

to the last Impurities of criminal Love. The Church distinguishes these Pleasures as well as the World, and both agree that some of them are innocent; but the Church accounts the greatest part of these Pleasures to be criminal, whose Innocence the World supports and maintains. Pleasure is an Idol to which all the World sacrifices, young and old, Men and Women, great and small, rich and poor, all Ages, Sexes and Conditions love Pleasures; so that if we determine by Voices, we shall lose our cause. The young especially cannot endure that we should take from them the Use of Pleasure, to which they think Youth should be consecrated and devoted: Painters and Poets, that contribute to the corrupting the Mind, represent to us Pleasure, as a young Man or Maid, laid on a Bed of Flowers, and encompass'd with all those Objects from whence the Pleasures of the Body are deriv'd. The Passions, that are all carnal, and have a strict Alliance with the Sense, are boyling hot in Youth: The Flesh, that is vigorous and hath received as yet no Mortification,

Mortification, domineers with Insolence. And therefore Youth follows the Agitations and the Transports of their Temperament; the Sentiments of Piety and the Habits of Vertue are not to be look'd for there; so that Reason destitute of those Helps is easily vanquish'd by the Passions. Nay, one may say, that Reason conspires with the Passions in that Age, and serves but to throw them into greater Excesses. They reason in their manner; they persuade themselves that Wisdom is not so becoming Youth, but is rather the Lot of those that are growing old; and they abuse that saying of the wise Man; *There is a time for every business under Heaven.* If some of them are otherwise inclin'd, they are afraid to follow those better Motions, they are struck with a criminal kind of Shame, and are loth to be remarkable for their Singularity. They throw themselves into the Crowd, and are carried away by the stream; and even those that are of better Understanding in the World, if they dare not authorize these Disorders, they at least

least excuse them. They are young, say they, they will return again, we must indulge something to Age; one is not born wise, we have been as they are, and they will one Day be as we are now.

But alas, we do not stop here, we renounce not to Pleasure, when we are past our Youth; the love of that is a Distemper that we carry with us in all Ages, we yield as late as we possibly can; or, to say truth, never. Age and Distempers sometimes fasten Men to Pleasures, but very seldom make them give them over; this is the hardest and the rarest thing imaginable. How often do we see Women that are resolv'd to hold out against Time, and that catch hold of every thing they can light on, not to be carried away by the Stream; they omit no manner of Way to conserve the Air of Youth; they would deceive Men, and it may be they think of deceiving Death too. They would always be the Object of the Love of this World, that they may have their shares of its Pleasures; and when Age is come, and

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Death spread its Marks upon their Hew,
they draw a Curtain over it to render
the Defects invifible. You may fee them
Idolatreffes of the World, burying their
Heads under a heap of Powder, to min-
gle and confound the whitenefs of their
Gray, with the white of their Powders;
they fill up the Hollownefs of their Face;
and shadow the Wrinkles of their Brows
with Curls and Ribbands, Nets and
ointments. What they more wifely do, is that
they Embalm their Bodies, and cover
them with Sweets, to hinder the nau-
fous living Carcaffes. In this Drefs they
mix with all Company, and will
be Parties concern'd in every merry
meeting. We fee them at Balls, and
the Play-houfes, trembling with Weak-
nefs; though they have not fight enough
to diftinguifh red from black, nor a Ca-
r from a Deuce, yet they muft play at
Cards and Dice, although it be with
Spectacles. In a Word, after they have
been the Idols of the World, they cha-
fe the Faults they made it commit,
they become its Punifhment, and are
its

its Abomination. They are Spectres and Fantoms that pursue and scare it, and it flees them, and has them in Abhorrence.

But as for the Men, are they wiser? Do we not see too among them, old Sinners, perfectly worn out with Debauchery, but yet whose Lusts and Desires are young and boyling? Their Inclinations are continually vicious, though their Bodies will obey them no longer in being the Ministers of their polluted Pleasures. In considering them, I represent to myself, what happens after the burning of a House; when the main Fire hath ceased, we see, a great while after, Sparks and little Flames pierce through the Heaps of Rubbish; this lets us see the Fire is still alive, and only wants more Matter; and so it is with these old Men; they are but a heap of warm Ashes, and the Reliques of a Fire, but in the midst of these Ashes we see from time to time, Efforts of vice. Concupiscence are made, that let us see, the Love of Pleasure still lives within, and that the Body only wants Strength

strength to put those impotent Desires in
 effect.

All Men then are on Pleasure's side ;
 and they are not content to defend it by
 plurality of Votes, but would likewise
 maintain it by Arguments. They tell
 us, God and Nature do nothing in vain,
 the Earth is covered with Creatures, the
 sea is fill'd with Fish, the Air with
 Fowls, and the whole World with Plea-
 sures. Is it possible for God, who made
 them for our Service, to forbid us the
 Use of them? Hath the Author of Na-
 ture done so many sensible Wonders,
 to fill the Senses with Illusions, and
 excite in them criminal Affections? Hath
 God inscribed on every Creature, *Touch*
not ? At this rate, the Condition of a
 Man is exceeding miserable: When he
 was in Paradise, there was but one Tree
 that was forbidden him to taste, and
 now are all things in the World become
 as so many mortal and forbidden Fruits,
 that we must not touch but die the
 Death ? How suits it with the Wisdom
 and the Goodness of God to place Man
 amidst so many Temptations, if he cannot
 fall

fall into any one without Sin? Is there not a natural Bond and Tie betwixt Love and Beauty, betwixt Desires and Things desirable? And why should God have made so many Things so lovely and so good, if he design'd to forbid Men their Enjoyment or desiring them? Alas, there are too many Evils unavoidable, why should we search for others that we may easily shun? And since that the good Things of this World are not the Rewards of the Blessed, they are at least the Consolations of the Miserable, as says *St. Austin*, why should we not enjoy these Delights that are the Sweetnings and the Solaces of all our Pains? If you take Joy from the Soul, is not this to take Life from it? Don't you bury it alive? Don't you make of human Life a sad and melancholly Night? In a Word, do you not make poor Man the miserablest Creature in the World? In short, say they, Religion is not so severe, nor stuck with so many Thorns, as you would make us believe; if you ascend to its Original, you will find, say they, Religion much more pure and disingaged from the rigours Superstition

superstition has cloath'd it withal. The Saints
have had their Excesses, and have given
God thanks for a Table well covered, for
a full Bowl and an overflowing Cup. They
have said, That Wine was design'd *to*
make glad the heart of Man: Our Lord
himself, the Author of the true Religion,
himself had his Feastings, and went to the
Marriage-Dinner, and there made ex-
cellent Wine to give the Guests good
entertainment. 'Tis thus they plead for
pleasure; and the misfortune is, these
Maxims are not only vented abroad in the
World, but we are trying to bring them
to the Church. We have Directors
appointed for the purpose, that deck Reli-
gion with Flowers; that cry, *Make*
straight the paths and smooth the rugged
ways, enlarge the Road, that all the
World may walk therein; they make
devotion easy for us, and are full of,
My yoke is easy and my burden light.
Love maketh easy our Lord's Yoke, for
all is easy, all is sweet to him that loves;
but these bad Masters make their Yoaks
easy by dispensing with the Love of
God, and suffering Men to love the
World,

World, and follow its Delights. And the Reason why, both in the World and Church there are so very few truly devout, is because there are so very many lovers and pursuers of Pleasure.

MEDITATION.

Wretch that I am! I do not the good I would, but the evil that I would not that I do. I understand very well the force of the reasons of Religion, that call me to renounce the pleasures of the World and the weakness of the Pleas of all their Advocates: But all these reasons find their door shut, because my heart is set against them; and those bad reasonings that maintain the use of pleasure enter easily because they are allied to the corruptions of my heart. My flesh is troubled to find the reasons of Piety so strong, and would be glad that those of pleasure were better. And my Soul is grieved, when it sees the force of Truth, and finds in it self an unwillingness to yield. I seriously bewail my state, that though I see the weakness of

Reasons that sway me on the side of
 pleasure, yet I suffer my self to be carried
 away by them, as tho' they were strong
 reason. For Piety and Reason get no-
 thing by joyning Forces, Passion is ever
 victorious. O my Soul, thou art an Idol-
 ater of pleasure; 'tis to no purpose for
 me to shift places, thou carriest thy Di-
 vinities along with thee. If thou renoun-
 cest any pleasure, thou dost not quit thy
 idolatry, but only changest the object of
 thy worship. For the love of pleasure finds
 new ways to be sure to lose nothing, but for
 the object lost provides thee with another.
 Judge then of what nature thy Devoti-
 on must needs be, when thou dividest
 them betwixt thy Idols and thy God. O
 take that part, my Soul, that good part,
 that shall not be taken from thee; thou
 must not serve two Masters, God and the
 world. It may be thou rejoycest, that
 thou hast renounced the pleasure of thy
 youth, in that thou lovest no longer Balls
 and Comedies and Plays: but thou per-
 ceivest not, that corruption ties thee to
 some other objects, and that thou art a slave
 to thy passions, and the cheat and property

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of

of thy own heart. In thy youth thou tookst pleasure to scatter abroad thy Money, but now thou takest delight in keeping it together. What difference is there between these two pleasures? Are they not both pleasures of the Senses? Have they not both one Source, to wit, sensual things? Do they not produce the same effect, and separate thee from God? A young Man that gives himself to the excess of useful Pleasures, should he value himself because he plays not at Cherry-stones and Push-pin as he did when he was a Boy? Every Age of Life hath its peculiar passions and pleasures, but all in general are Enemies to Devotion. Be not therefore troubled to know what it is that makes thee sleep at Sermons, 'tis the Devil of Pleasure and Delight that makes thee; when thou ceasest to be attentive at thy Prayers, 'tis he that leads thee by the Ears, and carries thee astray: And that thou feelest no delight in the presence of God, who would unite himself immediately unto thee, comes from hence that thou art plung'd and overwhelm'd in Matter; and being entirely in the interest of corporal and carnal things, thou thinkest

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thinkest there is nothing real, but what thou feelest; and knowest of no true joys, but what proceed from things sensible. Re-enter then, my Soul, re-enter then thy self; permit these bodily Objects, no longer to dazzle the Eyes of thy Understanding; seek for the presence of thy God: Harken to the eternal Wisdom that speaks to thee the secret of thy heart: Resist the attempts which the flesh makes to destroy thee. Believe not the report of thy Senses, take not those for true delights, they offer to thee. Look upon nothing which thou seest, as worthy of thy application and esteem. Suffer thy self to be full of the Lord, and entirely occupied in him. And if thou applyest thy self to him, he will apply himself to thee; and from this mutual Application, will proceed pleasures so great that thy imagination is not capable of conceiving.

P R A Y E R.

My Lord and my God, what shall I render to thee for so many Favours, and what shall I do to expiate so many ingratitude? Thou hast plac'd me in a

Paradise where all good things abound. Thou hast ordain'd me master of all the works of thy hand, and hast given me the use of all I see; Thou hast made sensible creatures that they may have some agreement with my senses, and may be as steps to raise me to things intelligible, but by reason of my corruption they are become snares: I make use of the visible creatures to ascend to things not seen; but I make use of them to descend below my self; I immerse my self in matter, and bury my mind in bodily things. Thus I make my Mind a slave to its body. The heaven and earth, the sea and air, are fill'd with objects, that might serve to make me know thee, that I might admire and praise thee, but I use them only to offend thee: All things are full of objects to flatter and please the senses: but, O God, thou hast not made them with design, that I should there seek for sensual pleasures, and intoxicate my senses with joys and corporeal delights. Thou hast made, by thy profound Wisdom and by thy infinite power, the fishes of

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the sea, the creatures of the earth, plants and several fruits, with many precious liquors, and all for the taste; perfumes for the smell, and beauties for the eyes, sounds for the ears, and several pleasures for the touch. I am assured, O my God, that thou hast done all this to save, and not to destroy me; had I remained innocent, and in the state thou createdst me, I could not thus have abused all thy goods, in using and possessing them: I might then have used them, because this use should not have debased and brought down my mind to sensible things, by dividing me from thee, but I might still have continued perfectly united to thee. But now the Devil hath spread abroad his snares in every creature, and fixed temptations on every object of my sense. Thou seest then, O my God, thou seest me surrounded with tempters on all hands; I cannot open my eyes, nor hearken with my ears, but I perceive some image that awakens my corrupt imagination and inflames my wicked desires. O Son of God, O Holy Ghost, be you the guardians

dians of my heart; let me vanquish these temptations; O favour me so far, as to recall thy creatures to their true and right use, that I may not abuse them; let me know and understand them, that I may wonder at thy power, and praise thy wisdom; that from these corporal images I may draw spiritual ones, and find thee in all thy creatures, and my heart may more and more return to thee, thou infinite eternal Spirit.

C H A P. II.

That the Pleasures of the Senses, neither in their use, nor abuse, agree with the Spirit of Christianity and Devotion.

I Know very well this Maxim must appear strange to the greatest part of Men; and particularly to those that are prepossess'd with the Opinions we have been examining in the foregoing Chapter. The Maxims of the Church are opposite to those of the World, as Light is to Darkness. The World authorizes all sensual

sensual Pleasures, the Church condemns them almost all: We do not therefore simply form our Process against those Debauchees, whose Name is odious even in the World; but we condemn even those who are esteem'd good and honest Folks, who indeed have some degree of moral Honesty, and whose Lives are free from the severity of the Laws taking hold on them, but who throw away their Lives in the vain Pleasures of this World. All these Pleasures that we think innocent, are Enemies of Devotion, and accord not at all with the Spirit of Christianity, neither in their use, nor their abuse; and if we cannot render this Truth victorious by plurality of Voices, let us at least make it evident by the force of Reason.

First, Let us hear our Lord Christ speaking to this Matter; for where can we find the *Spirit of Christianity*, better than in Christ Jesus himself? Hear him then describing the Way that leads to Life. *Wide is the gate and broad the way that leads to Death, and many there are that enter therein; for strait*

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is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to Life. If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and follow me. If any one will come after me, let him take up his Cross and follow me. If thine Eye offend thee, or thy right Hand, pluck it out, and cut it off, and cast it behind thee. Blessed are the poor: Blessed are those that hunger and thirst: Blessed are they that mourn, and are persecuted. And have not the Disciples followed their Masters herein? Do they not say also, Mortify therefore your members that are on Earth. If any one loveth the World, the love of the Father dwelleth not in him. Be ye sober and watch, and be not ye conformable to this present World. As Strangers and Pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts. Be not partakers of the unfruitful works of darkness. Make not the Temples of the Holy Ghost, the Members of an Harlot. The Spirits of the Prophets differed not from that of the Apostles. Behold, I said of Joy it is madness, and of Laughter it is folly. It is better for a man to go into the house of mourning, than of feasting; for that is the end of all men.

and the living will lay it to heart. It is
 good for a man that he bear the Yoke in
 his youth. I said in mine heart, go to
 now I will prove thee with mirth, there-
 fore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is
 vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in the
 time of thy youth, but know that for all
 these things God will bring thee to judg-
 ment. And now, in Conscience, are
 these the Characters of the Christians
 of our times? These Crosses, Thorns,
 these hard Ways, these strait Gates, this
 Yoke, this renouncing of the World,
 and all its Poms and Vanities, do they
 signify that we may follow our Lord Je-
 su Christ, with all our train of Pleasures
 and Delights; sometimes amidst our
 feasts, sometimes at Balls, sometimes at
 comedies, sometimes at Plays? These
 effeminate Lives, that are spent at
 Cards and Dice, in vain and criminal
 conversations, in Intrigues of sensual
 love; have they any Agreement with
 the Combats, the Wrestlings and the
 Exercises, from which the holy Spirit bor-
 rows Emblems to express the Life of a
 Christian? So fight, so run, that ye
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may obtain, and bear away the Prize. *Mortify therefore your flesh, and bring it under subjection. So fight ye, not as beating the Air.* Heaven and Earth, Life and Death, are in no greater Opposition than the effeminate Life of Christians, and the pourtrait of their Life drawn by the holy Spirit.

But above all, let us remember often that the Spirit of Christianity and of Devotion loves nothing so well as Mortification, to which the pleasures of the Sense are deadly Enemies: *Mortify therefore your members that are on earth*, said St. Paul; and is this the way to mortify your Members, by feeding them with Pleasures; by laying them on Beds of Down, by ransacking both Sea and Land to furnish them with delicate Provisions by joining Art with Nature in committing precious Liquors, and running after every thing that may enchant the Senses? Some will say, that by those Members, of which the Gospel enjoins the Mortification, we must understand Vice, which I grant. But know you not, that the Members of the Body, are the Organs

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ine, and, as were, the seat of the Members of the old Man, which are the Vices? We cannot destroy Vice, but by mortifying our Members. The flesh is that unhappy Ground, accursed of God, that produceth Thorns and Briars; and the more you manure this Ground, the more will it produce of these venomous Plants. We are therefore obliged to deprive it of those Pleasures, that foment our Lusts, that it may be barren with regard to such unhappy Product.

The Spirit of Christianity and Devotion, is a Spirit of Strength; but Pleasure is soft, enervates the Soul, and effeminates Valour; and the Church requires a vigorous Soul, and a Heart of such a make, as cannot be hurt by the most weighty Blows, or sharpest Swords of her Enemies. We have to march between a hundred and a hundred drawn swords. He that will follow the truth of Christ, must resolve to suffer Persecution, because we have always the Devil and the World to cope with. But a soft voluptuous Life proper, do you

O 2 • think,

think, to dispose one for Martyrdom? When we rise from a Bed of Sweets, from a delicious Table, with our Heads full of the fumes of a Debauch, are we in a Condition to go up to the Scaffold, to enter the Flames, and look on Racks and Tortures without terror? Where would it be most reasonable to seek for the Heroes of Jesus Christ, that can meet Death undaunted; amongst the Christians of our days, that are drench'd in Pleasures, or amongst those whose rigorous, sharp, retir'd Life, hath openly declar'd War to all the Pleasures of the World? But we are not call'd, it may be said, to Martyrdom, and according to all appearance, never shall. That may be; but no matter, we must always be in a disposition of suffering Martyrdom, if need were. But do we think that the Sword and Fire of Persecutions the most dangerous of our Temptations? We think we have need of great Strength and Courage, to endure Punishment only. But alas, he that went off victorious from these bloody Combats, hath often fallen into the Devil's Net.

Ch. II.

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Men that have carried in their Bodies
the glorious Marks of the Lord Jesus,
have since become the Sons of Wrath,
suffering themselves to be surpriz'd,
by the Devil of Pride, of Avarice, Un-
cleanness and Heresy. He that had
sent a Lion in twain by his mighty
strength, and slain the *Philistines* by
whole Troops, with the Jaw-bone of an
Ass, fell by the wiles of *Dalila*, and
was carried in Chains to the Temple of
an Idol. This Truth is not unknown
in the World: 'Twas well said, that the
delights of *Capua* did more than the
Roman Sword, and found the way of
softning and of breaking the hard *Afri-*
cans that followed *Hannibal*, and carried
Victory in Triumph after them. Thus
the Tranquility God gives us, should
not make us sleep in the Arms of Plea-
sure: Prosperity is a powerful Tempta-
tion, and Pleasure it self a Monster that
cannot vanquish without a vigorous
and brave Resistance. Let us consider
this great Matter.

The Pleasures of the World, are either of Sense, or of Imagination. Now these Faculties are Corporeal, and therefore all their Pleasures are Corporeal: And this is enough to say to such as would follow the Spirit of the Gospel, that they cannot lawfully seek after them. For the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, leads Men to the neglecting and despising of the Body, and always speaks of it with a kind of Contempt. According to the style of the Holy Ghost, the Body is but *Dust and Ashes; an earthly house; an house of Clay, that Worms shall feed on and destroy; a flower that grows up in the morning, and is cut down at even; a stream that passes away; a shadow that disappears; a dream that vanishes; a smoke that is lost whilst it ascends.* And as he speaks with Contempt, so he would have us take as little care of it. *Take no care for the Body, saith St. Paul, to obey it in the lusts thereof: Take no thought for the morrow, says our Lord, for the morrow shall take thought for it self, or for what ye shall eat or drink, or wherewith ye shall be clothed.*

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But for the Soul, the Holy Ghost would have us turn all our Cares on that side; he would have us *watch, and be sober*, to keep the Soul, *because the Devil goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour.* He bids us *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*, and would have us in perpetual care about it. He commands us to feed our Souls with the milk of Understanding, pure and simple, and furnish them with solid Food. He would have us entertain them with continual Joy; and seek those noble pleasures that are found in the possession of God, which are proper only to the Soul. The Gospel would have us dress and adorn them, that they may be as a fair spouse without spot, and fit to be presented to our Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom. Examine but the conduct of Voluptuous Men, how contrary it is to this; they act as though they were all flesh; and as if their Soul were but as much Salt to keep the Body from corruption; all the Ideas that they have of Pleasure, come to them from Sense and

and Imagination, and they have no more conception of spiritual Joys, than blind Men have of Colours. As therefore they have neither tasted any other than corporeal Delights, they believe they are oblig'd to their Bodies for all their Happiness. And in effect it is so, for at what time they taste their carnal Pleasures, one cannot say they are not happy, since Happiness consists in Joys and Pleasures, and which they, for that moment are in possession of. Thus, because we chiefly love what we consider as the source of our Felicity, we must not think it strange, if these Men of Pleasure love their Bodies, which they look on as the sources of their delights. We see, Men have the same Sentiments for their Bodies, as the Saints have for God, who is their Sovereign Good, and in whom they find their greatest Joy. They worship this Body, they cherish it, perfume it, sacrifice, and offer Incense to it: And if you offer it any Indignity, they are as jealous of it as of their Divinity. Nay, they have greater Indignation at him that hurts this Body, than

at him that is a known Blasphemer or sacrilegious Person. In a word, this Body is so very like their God, that they sacrifice all to it, even to their Consciences; nay, even to God himself. But nothing is more opposite to Christianity and the Spirit of Devotion, than this sentiment. For the true Christian is obliged to despise his Body; to sacrifice it to his God; to see himself torn in pieces for his Name's sake, and to renounce all sensual pleasures for his glory.

The Spirit of the Gospel, and of Devotion, absolutely tends to the contempt of the World; but the Spirit of sensual Pleasure tends to the love of the World. How can we but love the World, when it caresses us, when it serves us, and gives us pleasure; since we love it when it frowns upon us, when it persecutes, and fills our Cup with bitterness? The World is a great Cheat, and an inexhaustible spring of Illusions; it masks it self, and shews it self before us, under the Image of corporal Delight; it embraces us with a Garment and Crown bedeck'd with Flowers, but then

then those Flowers have under them a thousand Prickles. We see not indeed these Prickles, but the Flowers only; we are only sensible of the Pleasures, and love the Cause from whence they spring. But every one knows, that nothing is more opposite to Devotion, than the love of the World, as we have already shewn; and consequently there is nothing more opposite to the Spirit of Christianity and Devotion, than sensual Pleasure.

The Spirit of the Christian Religion would inspire a contempt of the present Life, and a desire of that to come. Now it is certain, nothing fastens us so much to this Life, as these sensual pleasures. The Saints still say, and ought to say, *I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, for this is much better. I knew that when this earthly Tabernacle is dissolved, we have an house eternal in the Heavens, and therefore we desire to be invested again with this heavenly House: None of these things move me, nor count I my life dear unto me. As the Hart panteth after the brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee, O God.* O

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When shall I appear before the presence of God? It is impossible, that Men who live in a perpetual use of pleasures, should have such Sentiments as these. Every one desires to be happy, and when he is once so, or believes he is so, he cannot renounce that which he looks upon to be the spring of his Happiness. These carnal Men think they are happy, whilst they are enjoying their Delights, and have no other Ideas of Happiness than that which they enjoy in this present Life. They hear a great many talk continually of another Life, and another sort of Happiness; but they have got a habit of not suffering themselves to be affected by any other thing than Sense and Imagination; and so because this Life and this Happiness fall not under any Sense, nor can be well imagined, they can consider them no otherwise, than as imaginary Beings, that are nothing in respect of them, because they have no manner of Ideas of them; their Hearts (in a word) because they meet with nothing in this Life but gross Earth, that is to say, abundance

abundance of Prosperity, take deep rooting in it. Their Affections, intoxicated with the pleasures of the Flesh, bound themselves with sensible Objects; they desire nothing beyond, because they wish for nothing that they know not of, or have not any clear distinct Ideas of. The Earth is become their Country, here they are naturaliz'd, and all the rest is to them a strange and unknown Religion.

Let them however say what they will; but surely 'tis a sad preparative for Death, this continual use of those Pleasures, whose innocence the World contend for. *O Death, saith the wise Man, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to him that lives in peace with his good things.* We live much better in a Palace than a Prison; but 'tis more difficult to die in one, than in the other. How insupportable is the thought of Death, how terrible his Presence to the Man that lives in the midst of pleasure! He looks upon him as a Judge, that is come to pronounce a dreadful Sentence against him, and like an Executioner that

seizes

izes on him to lead him to Punishment. But the good Christian who has always kept his Body in a privation of carnal pleasures, looks on Death, as on a Messenger that brings him good News, that is coming to break down his Prison-walls, and leave him at liberty to go to Heaven. The Voluptuous suffer themselves to be drag'd to Death, they catch hold of every thing they meet withal to hinder their being carried off; they yield indeed at last to Necessity, but they yield to it with a very ill Grace. Those therefore who multiply to themselves sensual pleasures, do but make themselves Chains whose breaking will cost them many a flood of Tears. But the Saints who have renounc'd the pleasures of this Life, will find no difficulty in leaving it, since they have already lost all that was agreeable therein.

I would say here that sensual pleasures are Enemies to Devotion, because they absolutely take away all the relish of spiritual ones, which the faithful find in their conversing with God; if I had not already said as much, and if it were not

not evident by Reason and Experience. We know very well, those people who are slaves to sensual pleasures, look upon all that can be said of the pleasures of Devotion, as so many Fables. Tell them of the Delights that a faithful Soul tastes when God, in secret, is speaking to his Heart of the sweetness it finds in meditating on the love he hath for us, or in the contemplation of his Mysteries, and they think you are telling them of so many Dreams and Visions. 'Tis certain, one has no farther sense of the Joys of the Mind, than as one has renounc'd those of the Body. Therefore 'tis we are so little affected with the delights of Prayer, and Contemplation, because we have so imperfectly renounc'd our sensual pleasures. We must own that in this respect the rich and honourable are expos'd to great Temptations; their Condition, they say, obliges them every Day, to draw after them a train of pleasures; if this be so, they are unhappy; and in view of this, our Lord might well say, *How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*. Riches

Riches and Honours are continual Temptations to Voluptuousness; and difficult is to be always tempted and never all: But Temperance and Moderation on the other hand are also worthy of great praises, when they preserve a Man amidst so many Enemies that have conspired his Ruin: This is very rare, but therefore Devotion is so too amongst such as think themselves oblig'd by their Degree and Rank to live continually in pleasures.

In fine, if it is, as certainly it may be, permitted to draw proofs from Examples, we can easily prove, that the spirit of Devotion and Christianity are enemies to sensual pleasures. Which, do you think, better understand the spirit of Christianity; the Christians of our Age, that take such liberty as strict Morality would call Libertinism, or the Christians of the past Ages, that liv'd a very rigorous and austere Life? Abundance have there been, who not finding in the World a place of retreat secure enough against the Temptations of pleasure, have sought one in the Desarts, where

where they might meet with none but pure and harmless Objects. Others have clad themselves in Hair and Sackcloth; Others have still continued amongst Company, but preferr'd Fasting and Mortification to all the pleasures of this Life. Do ye think these Men were wiser than we, or we than they? I know you will not stick at this, but place these Rigours and Austerities amongst the Fruits of Enthusiasm, and Illusions of the Spirit of Error. But sure, this is a rash Judgment, from which we appeal to God's Tribunal, to whom alone it belongs of right to distinguish, in austere Lives, *Sincerity* from *Hypocrisy*.

But would we have an Example that is not subject to Mistakes? Let us look then on our Lord Jesus, had his Life any thing in common with the Pleasures of the Sense? You see him born in a Stable, brought up in a Carpenter's House, fasting forty Days in the Wilderness, and living upon the Alms of the Women that followed him. We hear him telling us *he had no where to lay his head*. We see him going on Foot and without Equipage

quipage from Place to Place: Now, good earnest, does this favour of the Spirit of the World, and a delicious Life? Who better knows what the Spirit of Christianity should be than Jesus Christ himself; and what are the Effects of Devotion, than he who was perfectly devoted to his Father? After all this, don't tell me, that our Lord was not an Enemy to Pleasures, because we find him sometimes at Festivals and Marriages: How were it to be if our Saviour were at all our Festivals! One should not see such Madness and Debauchery reign there; but Wisdom, Temperance, Soberness, and the greatest Moderation that can be, would be his Attendants.

MEDITATION.

My Soul, since thou art then encompassed with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, run with patience the Race that is set before thee. Since thou art shewn the way by so many great and holy Examples, thou needs must imitate and follow them. Would'st

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thou follow an Elias in the Desert, as Moses on the Mount, fast forty days, and not be fed but with bread by the Ravens, and drink of the Brook? But these are particular Calls that respect not thee; but if any one will follow John the Baptist, be cloath'd in Camels skin, and wear a leathern Girdle, and live on Locusts and wild Honey; say not of him because he cometh neither eating nor drinking, he hath a Devil. Take heed of making such a rash judgment: Those that come to exhort Men to Repentance should preach up Mortification, both by their actions, words, their Habits, and their food. Thou hast need, my heart, to mortify and to repent thy self, and therefore 'twould be well thy body were cloath'd in sackcloth and hair. But this Example thou wilt say, of John the Baptist maketh not a Law, and if God hath not commanded it, thou canst not be oblig'd to it. Take then another Example, another Model, much more perfect, and such as thou should'st follow, the Example of thy Lord and Saviour, the Pattern in whose steps thou needs must tread. O live like him

and 'twill be well enough: The Disciple
 must not look to be greater than his Master:
 he liv'd in the World, but he was not of the
 World: He eat and drank to give Examples
 of Sobriety: He conversed with Men, to teach
 them to speak soberly and wisely; for he
 opened not his Mouth, but to teach and
 justify. He is the Model of all that thou
 should'st suffer, all that thou should'st do,
 and all thou should'st leave undone. Suffer
 as he did patiently the scorns and out-
 rages of the World: Drink as he did with
 the Spirit of Submission the Cup of God's
 anger, when he presents it to thee: Do
 the good works he did; employ the day in
 doing good to those that are afflicted, and
 the night in Prayers: And let thy meat
 and drink be to do the will of thy Father
 that is in Heaven: Abstain as he did from
 the pleasures of the World, lay his Cross
 upon thee, and mortify sin in the flesh, since
 thy Saviour mortified his. If any one
 says me, said he, let him come after
 me and follow me. But, O my Soul,
 how far art thou from him! How imper-
 fect is thy Imitation, and how short dost
 thou come of thy great Pattern! But lose

not Courage; labour, march on, leave all things else behind, and tend to what is before thee! The holy Spirit, sent by thy Saviour, will conduct thee in that hard and difficult way, as in a Country that is at peace and quiet. If thou canst not attain to the perfection of that great Model, which God hath set before thine Eyes, approach at least as near as thou canst, for if thou would'st be happy as he was, thou must be just and holy as he was, thou must enter in at the strait Gate, and walk in the way of mortification, to arrive at that life of which he is the Author and the Source. The Soul of thy Saviour was not only depriv'd of all the pleasures of the Sense, but was also pierced through with many Sorrows. To imitate him thou must renounce to all carnal Delights, and submit thy self to the bitter sorrows of Repentance.

P R A Y E R.

O my divine Redeemer, my Jesus, my Saviour, and my God, thou wouldst that I should follow thee, and hast said

Learn

Learn of me. Thy Apostles have said,
Look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher
of your Faith; be ye Imitators of us as we
also are of Jesus. It is but fit, my Sa-
viour, I should follow thee. Thou hast
taken upon thee my infirmities, how
should I glory then, how should I long
to possess thy vertues! But if it be so
glorious, 'tis as difficult: I can do all
things through him who strengthens me,
and can do nothing of my self. O give
me then the grace that is necessary to
accomplish what thou commandest, and
after that, command me what thou wil-
lest. Thou madest thy self like to me,
in taking my flesh; O make me like
to thee by giving me thy Spirit. I am
thy image, O God; but a defaced cor-
rupted image, and on which the Devil
hath spread his infamous marks. O
cleanse thou me again; pass with the
pencil of thy grace over the defaced
lines of this thy image: Wash away
all the impurities the world hath scat-
tered and left there: If I cannot fol-
low thee, draw me, that I may run
after thee: give me the wings of
thy

thy love, that I may fly after thee: give me, O my Lord, the desire to imitate and follow thee, for sure I should if I desir'd it: I will, I will, my God, but 'tis not with a free triumphant will, but with a slavish one. Give me, O Lord, to will and to do. My flesh findeth the paths thou hast troden both sharp and difficult, and is discourag'd at the sight of these difficulties. How cowardly and how unjust is this wretched body! what if thou hadst indispensably commanded me to walk in the ways of thy forerunner *John the Baptist*: To dwell in the wilderness; to inhabit some poor cave at the foot of a mountain; or the trunk and shade of some old oak; to be clothed with haircloth, to feed ordinarily on locusts, and to make a feast on some wild honey? If thou leddest not such a life thy self, it was to spare us, and not to give us for an Example, a life almost inimitable. These are but the outfides of piety, which may sometimes be cloaks of hypocrisy; but thou hast given me for imitation greater examples, virtues real, solid, and internal. If thou com-
mandest

mandest me not to wear haircloth,
thou wouldest I should be clothed with
righteousness and holiness, with bowels
of compassion and a contented spirit.
If thou banishest me not to the deserts,
thou wouldest I should retire into the
secrets of my heart, there to converse
with thee, and hear the truths thou
wouldest reveal unto me. If thou obligest
me not to feed on locusts, thou wouldest
at least, that I should often feed upon
the bread of sorrow, and mix my drink
with my tears. Thou wouldest that I
should make my feasts near to the foun-
tain of *Siçhar*, at *Jacob's* well, pro-
found in mysteries, full of living waters,
of joy and consolation: that I should
seek for my delights in thee my Saviour,
who art that fountain *springing up to*
everlasting life: Thou wouldest that I
should feed upon thy love, and find no
 joys but in thee: Assist me then here-
 my Saviour, take from me all relish
of the pleasures of this world; cause
my heart to be entirely possessed by
thee: and that in embracing thee, I
may taste such a pleasure that may so
fill

fill the capaciousness of my soul, that ravish'd with that sweetness, it may cry out, *My soul is satisfied as it were with marrow and fatness.*

CH A P. III.

What can be innocent Pleasures. That Devotion is not chagrine, nor an Enemy to Pleasure.

I Have proved in the foregoing Chapters, that the Spirit of Devotion is an Enemy to sensual pleasures, and not only to those that are confessedly criminal, but to those also that are reputed innocent. In this Rank I have placed those continual Diversions in which the greater number and the better sort are much addicted. 'Tis time to explain our selves upon the Question which may be made here, Whether it may be necessary to the being a good Christian, and truly religious, to renounce all sort of pleasures? This is now to be answer'd in a word, because

one of the most nice and delicate Points of Christian Morality.

I say then, first of all, that Devotion is no Enemy to Mirth. It permits us to distinguish innocent from criminal Pleasures: 'Tis neither fierce nor brutal, but should be honest, civil, sweet and modest: It flies all softness, and decks not it self in Flowers; but neither does it affect to appear horrid, or be-set with Thorns and Prickles; In a word, it is not necessary that the Faithful, to be truly devout, should feed on Sorrow and black Melancholy. On the other side, Society is gay and free, *the Heart of the just is a continual Feast*; Our Lord would not have us affect a sad Countenance, and a dejected look, but bids us even in our Fastings and Mortifications, *anoint our heads with Oil, when we would be seen of Men, to avoid Ostentation in our Devotions.*

To know which are innocent pleasures, we must distinguish with exactness, and make a short but general review of all the orders and degrees of pleasures.

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First

First then, all Pleasures are either of the Mind or Sense. Of the Senses some are more visibly fastned to Matter, others less. Of the first kind, are the Taste and Touch; of the second, are the Sight and Hearing. The more spiritual pleasures are, the easier 'tis to make them innocent; the more material, the commoner they are to us with Beasts, and more easily become brutal and criminal. The pleasures of the Touch and Taste, are such, as are common to us with the Beasts. To look upon them in themselves they are unworthy of a Man, as he is a Man, and let them exceed never so little, they become in a manner brutal: But however, 'tis certain that these pleasures, because they are necessary, are in some degrees innocent. There are pleasures inseparable from those Actions that are necessary to the Conservation of Life, such as are eating, drinking, and sleeping. These pleasures cannot be Enemies to Vertue and Devotion. God is the Author of them: He hath put certain Agreements betwixt our Senses and the Objects

Objects; he hath annexed certain Pleasures to certain Actions, to the end we should love to do them, and take pains without vexation, in what is necessary to our preservation. We cannot hinder our selves from judging that Sugar is sweet, and Gall bitter, to find pleasure in good Victuals, and a kind of trouble in eating a thing disagreeable to our taste. 'Tis impossible not to feel a great deal of pleasure in drinking after a long Thirst: This is not what I call the use of pleasures of this World, for the use I mean is voluntary, and this is not so. Now Christian Morality, as severe as it is, cannot accuse involuntary sentiments of a fault. We cannot separate this sense of pleasure from the actions necessary to life; and though we could, we should not be oblig'd to do so.

The Moral of Christianity commands us not to mix our Meats with Gall, nor our Drinks with Wormwood. There are devotees in the World, that make their Vertue consist in the privation of these necessary pleasures, and say, *Give me the grace, O God, to taste*

no pleasure in the use of the things of this World, they are either Hypocrites, or intoxicated with vain Superstition. But let us take good heed, this is a slippery place. The Borders that separate Innocence from Guilt are so delicate, that they are almost imperceptible; we pass from one to the other, without knowing it. The point of separation is that which divides the *Necessary* from the *Superfluous*. 'Tis innocent to find pleasure in eating, 'tis faulty to eat to find pleasure. We must take our Food as we take our Physick, for necessity only; and this cannot possibly be faulty, although we should find pleasures in the way; but farther we cannot pass without some danger. There can nothing be better thought on, than what St. Augustine said on this occasion. *Then, when I pass from the incommmodity of hunger to the refreshment I find by eating, my Conscience lays Snares in the way; for it is accompanied with Pleasure, and there is no other way to come to that Refreshment which Necessity forces us to seek; although the support of Life be the*

ing that obliges us to eat and drink, this dangerous Pleasure crosses us in the passage, and looks at first like a Servant, but at times makes attempts to go before, and make me do that for it which I design'd only to do for pure Necessity. And that which serves to deceive us therein, is, that Necessity has not the same extent that Pleasure has; there being frequently enough for the necessary, when there is but little for the agreeable. Oft-times we are also uncertain, whether 'tis the Necessity of supporting Life, that occasions us to continue eating, or the deluding Charms of Pleasure: our unfortunate Souls are pleased with this uncertainty, and seek from hence excuses to defend themselves.

The Hearing and the Sight provide pleasures more pure, and less carnal; the Brutes know nothing of them, they are only proper to Men: If Beasts find pleasure in the sight of certain Objects, 'tis always by the connexion there betwixt those Objects, and the pleasures of the Taste and Touch, of which alone they are sensible. But yet 'tis certain, that of these pleasures of the Sight and

and Hearing, there are some exceeding criminal ; and such are those that have a particular Alliance with the Corruption of our Hearts and Minds, and are capable of awakening that Corruption. Of this sort are all lascivious Pictures and obscene Figures, impure Talk, the Sights on the Stage, human Beauties charg'd with borrow'd Ornaments, accompanied with Gestures, Words, and Actions, proper to the kindling foul unclean Desires. When we enjoy such pleasures, we abuse our Senses ; for the use of them is unlawful ; but amongst these pleasures of the Sight and Hearing, there may be found some innocent ; of these there are few but what come immediately from God's Hand, without having pass'd through Man's. Man has this unhappiness, that he leaves traces of his Corruption upon every thing that he meddles with. One cannot be faulty in looking with pleasure and with admiration on the Beauty of the Heavens, their Order, Motion, and their Light ; on fine Countries, verdant Meadows, and the agreeable Obscurity of a Forest,

forest, and a River that winds along the Hills. One cannot be faulty in finding pleasure in the murmurs of a gliding brook; the lovely Musick of the pretty birds, rejoycing in the Woods for the return of Spring. All these Delights disturb not the Soul, nor put it into any disorderly Motion, the Impressions they make are sweet and soft, and not being violent, they transport not the Soul, beyond its self and due Bounds, and therefore they are Friends enough to Piety. These pure and natural Ideas may excite Movements of Admiration for the Creator, of acknowledgement for their Author, and consequently may inspire us with Devotion for the Deity.

There are other corporeal pleasures, that I cannot well refer to any of the senses, and therefore I call them the pleasures of Imagination. Of this kind is the pleasure of having fine Houses, rich Moveables, magnificent Garbs, a great Train, and abundance of People to eat one's Substance. And these pleasures are not without their fault; they are pleasures of Imagination, and therefore

fore of Illusion, and where there is Illusion, there is Vanity; and where there is Vanity there is some fault. Therefore the wise Man cries out on every thing, *Vanity of Vanities*: But there is somewhat more than Illusion in the case, there is also Pride. The pleasure that this vain Pomp gives, this Luxury and State, comes from the desire we have of being Great, and from the pleasure we take of being thought so. We easily deceive other Men, and we would try to deceive our selves. We are like those Dwarfs, that affect to stand on high places, to diminish their natural lowness; and therefore people that have least Merit and real Greatness, are commonly fondest of these false Appearances. There are Conditions from which Magnificence is as it were inseparable: God that hath invested Kings with Power, takes it not ill they should be clothed in Purple. And 'tis necessary they should be surrounded with Pomp and Lustre, to surprize the Senses, to obtain with more ease the respect that is due to their high Station. 'Tis an ordinary Illusion of the Senses,

this

his that makes us look upon, as great,
all that dazles us. But 'tis an illusion
that in these cases has its use and benefit.
Where the true Greatness of Condition
and Authority is, we may well bear with
appearing Greatnesses: But yet there
may be a fault in its excess, as in other
things. The great ones resemble those
Giants, that are not content with their
natural Greatness, but stretch out their
hands towards Heaven, that they may
be seen the farther off. But above all,
it is a mad pleasure that, when one is lit-
tle in all respects, to please one's self in
appearing great, and clothing their con-
temptible Dust with Purple, that here-
fore was proper only to the Throne.
This is the Vice of our Age, and in which
we believe we exceed all other Ages. The
corruption is now spread so far, that
we think our selves oblig'd to follow it;
yet there are wise and pious Persons, that
propose, with great assurance, this dan-
gerous Maxim, That one should not di-
stinguish one's self, but that every one
should go cloth'd according to their
Quality and Condition, and affect no-
thing

thing singular: In a word, they boldly blame those Women, that making Profession of great Devotion, are but simply and meanly attir'd, and far from the Pomp of Persons of their Rank. 'Tis a strange thing we should be at such a distance from Devotion, that we should be afraid to come near it, and shun even all appearances thereof. According to this Maxim, 'twould be well, that Christian Women should be clad in richer Stuffs and more magnificent, that they should be adorn'd with Gold and Jewels in all abundance, since people of Quality are so; if they retrench these Vanities, to do Alms, and be merciful to the Poor, they are accus'd of making a shew of Devotion. The Mischief seems to be without a Remedy, when it has gotten thus much ground. The Church thought heretofore that it relax'd exceedingly, when it but tolerated these Disorders; but I'm afraid 'twill quickly come to give them Approbation. I would fain know of those that maintain this Maxim, where they could possibly find it. It is not in the holy Scriptures

ures; for *St. Peter* expressly forbids the Christian Women, Gold and embroider'd hair. 'Tis not in the Fathers, for they speak with more force when they speak against the Luxury and Pomp of Habits, than against any thing besides; they call the Pomp of the Devil. They preach in all places against this Vanity, and say, That by the Laws of Charity one is oblig'd to renounce these Superfluities, to comfort the Afflicted, and maintain the tottering Church. They would have that the plainness of Habits should be a Mark of Piety, and the renouncing of the World.

In opposition to all Reason they persist in saying, people must not distinguish themselves. What do they mean? Must we follow the Stream? because an Evil is common, must we not strive against it? Must we not try to get out of the Crowd that are going to Destruction? For my part, on the contrary, I think we ought to distinguish our selves if we have but the courage to do it. I would fain know, if great Modesty be not as good Garbs as in other things: If it be good,

good, can it be bad to shew an Example of it? Is it not rather an Honour to march the forwardest in the Paths of Vertue? I know that Habits have all along been different, according to Mens Conditions. But first we must observe, that in our Days, there are few or none that carry not their State beyond their Rank. Now it is always honourable to do what one should, according to the Condition one is in, although one should be single and alone. Moreover, heretofore they distinguish'd not Conditions so exactly as they now do; the difference of Conditions must have been exceeding great, to have People permitted to distinguish themselves from others by Magnificence. It was not enough to have been rich, or of birth rais'd above the Vulgar. But if at this time of day we suffer Men to be clothed, and spend according to their Conditions, Pride and Vanity, that mark out the Bounds of Distinction, will throw Men into strange Excesses. It is good furthermore, to consider, that there is a difference between tolerating a thing as permitted, and

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authorizing it as a thing necessary. We can bear that the Nobility should be distinguished from others by their Equipage and Train, and by their Garbs, provided it run not to that excess that now-a-days reigns. But we ought never to make this their Duty, nor tell them, that they ought not to distinguish themselves from those of their Rank. On the other hand, we must let them know, that 'tis a glorious thing to renounce these miserable Vanities, that are so displeasing to God. In a word, this Maxim was never more dangerous, than it is in our Days. To expend according to Mens Conditions, in the phrase of the World, is to expend all one's Estate in Vanities, Cloaths, Ornaments, Equipages, and things of that nature. When therefore any one says to another, distinguish not your self, but do as the rest of your Condition do; it is certain, he authorizes that unhappy Profuseness, that incapacitates Men from being liberal to the Church and Poor. I say therefore all that can be said, I shall never think that Man truly and perfectly Devout, whilst I see him encompass'd

compass'd with the Poms and Vanities of this World. One cannot have true Devotion without being truly humble. But now this Reason that they give us, which is the cause of so many useles Expences, to wit, that it should be according to each person's condition, fetches its rise from Pride. The true Christian, that considers himself with respect to himself and God, knows he is nothing but Dust and Ashes, and a very Nothing before God. He understands very well, that God knows no difference in our Conditions. And thus every good Soul will undoubtedly renounce this excess of Habits, and all other vain superfluous Expende, to do good works.

But now we must not persuade ourselves, that this Morality, which is truly that of Jesus Christ, is a Way that leads to Superstition, and that pious Persons are oblig'd to attire themselves in a base and extravagant manner. 'Tis in this respect we must bid them *affect nothing singular*. But there is a wide difference betwixt the Magnificence of the Age and such habiting as would make People ridiculous

ridiculous. I could not deny this small digression, to combat the Corruption of these Days, in favour of those good souls, that earnestly desire to do their duty, but understand not well to what they are oblig'd. I now return to the Pleasures of Imagination, of which I had begun to speak.

Amongst those I call the Pleasures of Imagination, I find some that are innocent. For example: A Man may innocently set his Heart upon the culture of a little piece of Ground. He may highly divert himself in dressing up his Borders and Pallisades, his Arbors, his Wall-fruit, and his Dwarf-trees. He will gather his Fruits, with greater acknowledgements of God's Goodness, than Monarchs have, in raising Tribute upon all their Kingdoms. A Father of a Family may take great pleasure in the ordering of his House, a Woman at her Work, and a Tradesman at the success of his Labours. It may be there is not in all this any real Felicity; they are Pleasures of Imagination, but 'tis not of foolish Imagination, that is fed with Illusions;

Illusions ; 'tis an Imagination guided by Reason, enlightned by Grace, and that judges that one should more esteem what one has, than all that one has not. These Pleasures are innocent Errors, if we may call them so, and are by no means Enemies to the Spirit of Devotion.

There are also Pleasures of the Mind (of another sort than those of the Imagination) which are in themselves innocent, such as good Conversation, the reading of good Books, eloquent Discourses, the study of Sciences, and Works of Wit and Learning. But there is a great deal of Precaution to be used here ; first, There is reason to fear, lest we confound the Wit with its Impurity. Oft-times we believe we find a great deal of pleasure in the Work, because there is a great deal of Wit, but indeed, 'tis only because there is a great deal of Impurity in it. There are certain Productions of Wit that flatter our Passions, such as are the Pieces of the Theatre, Romantick Stories, and what the World calls Gallantry in Prose and Verse. We admire the delicacy of Expression, the beauty of the Thought

thought, and the force of the Imagination; but look a little nearer, and you shall find the Heart incomparably more affected than the Mind: We love these Productions, because they have a secret Alliance with the corruption of our heart, and a Conformity with the Impressions of our sullied and impure imagination. The Pleasure that rises from them, comes from the Impurity that is delicately scattered up and down. There are Objects whose Turpitude is so great, that they create an horror in the Mind. When they are shewn to us naked, we cannot bear the sight of them; but we can willingly enough see them by Glances as it were, and through a loose Veil, that takes away all that is shocking and offensive to the Eyes, and lets them wholly in upon the Imagination, which entertains them with a stream Pleasure. This is the Character of the Pieces we speak of: but we must take good Heed, that amongst our innocent Diversions, we choose not those that arise from Sciences, that are criminal, curious, and visibly

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vain, of no Use and Purpose, but to fill the Mind, and drive thence all good things. We must also observe, that if 'tis permitted us to relish Pleasure in the Studies of good Learning and innocent and profitable Knowledge, we must however take heed that we suffer ourselves not to be too far possessed with them. Nothing can be innocent, that becomes an Obstacle to our Devotion.

This is sufficient, I think, to shew, that Devotion has not declared War with Pleasures and Delight. In making a wise and prudent Choice of Pleasures, one may find enough to sweeten all the Bitternesses of this Life ; so that it will not be necessary to bury our selves alive, and keep our Soul always in Sorrow, and always cloth'd with cloudy and black Melancholy.

M E D I T A T I O N .

How much am I indebted to God ! what return shall I make him for having plac'd me amidst so many good things,

and leaving me to the enjoyment of them!
 I should have had no reason to complain,
 after so much disobedience, he should
 have snatch'd me from this World, to
 plunge me into Hell. Was it not also in his
 power to make at least this World a kind of
 Hell to me, that I might be saved in the
 other world? One could not have blam'd his
 Wisdom nor his Justice, had he made me
 undergo here continual punishment, had he
 cut up from me all springs of pleasure
 and delight; had he turned all my fair
 days into so many sad and dismal Nights.
 He might have given me Eyes for nothing
 but to be fill'd with Tears, and Ears to
 receive no sound but that of Thunder and
 the Voice of his Judgments; a Taste for
 nothing but the bitterness of Gall and
 Sorewood; a Touch to be sensible of
 nothing but the weight of his Blows:
 He might have mingled all my Feasts with
 Gall, and empoisoned every Object, and
 clos'd them, as it were, with Thorns, to
 pierce me through at coming near them.
 Had he done this, I should have said, that
 it is just, and I a wretched Sinner; it
 is but reasonable that this World, polluted

by my sins, should be the Theatre of my sufferings, and that the Objects of my Senses, over all which my Corruption is spread, should become the punishment of my Offences. But on the contrary, God who commands me to be sober, wise and temperate, to renounce the vain pleasures of the World and Flesh, yet has left me pleasures more than I deserve sufficient to temper and make supportable the sad effects and consequences of sin. 'Tis true, sometimes he strikes me, and makes me feel the fierceness of his Anger: I am subject to Distempers, I may languish and become faint; I may lose the good things he hath given me; I may be despoiled of my Honours, and I may be persecuted. But when I reckon up my evil Days, and compare them with the good, I find that these are more than those; my pleasures carry it infinitely above my pains. If I put together all my hours of sicknesses, disquiet and vexations, 'twill make perhaps but a few months, or at most but a few years, but how many years of health and prosperity hath God bestowed on me? I am wretched and ungrateful that I am;

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little pain in my Finger makes me become
 insensible of the health of my whole Body;
 an hour of disquiet poisons my whole Life,
 and makes me forget all my Prosperities,
 and all the Obligations that I have to God.
 But should my misfortunes have gone far-
 ther, and continued longer, they had not
 been as long as my life, and conse-
 quently had been of less continuance than
 my sins: And therefore I should have had
 no reason to complain, but rather to boast
 of his favours and goodness. For if I have
 been unhappy for some years, yet I have
 been a Sinner from my first moment. And
 should the minutes of my sufferings pass in
 God's Account, and satisfy his justice for
 as many minutes of my Sin, what wouldst
 thou owe him yet, my Soul, for all the
 rest, since the number of thy sufferings
 comes not near the number of thy Sins?
 The minutes in which God hath suffered
 me to enjoy his good Gifts, have been those
 in which I have made my self most faulty,
 by the abuse of my Prosperity: And the
 least sin I have committed in one of those
 minutes, might deserve the pains of infi-
 nite duration.

PRAYER

P R A Y E R.

Great God, that makest all things with immense wisdom, I have nothing to blame in thy works: All that thou hast made is good. But I bewail my misfortune and lament my corruption. The good dwells in the neighbourhood of evil, and the things thou permittest me are so near to what thou forbiddest, that if I never so little forget my self, from innocent I pass to criminal delights. The Devil lies in Ambuscade in every place; and my concupiscence throws out its Snares on every hand: The way is strait, and borders still on Precipices. I know, my God, thou art of infinite goodness, and requirest not of me, that I should live continually in grief; thou yieldest something to the flesh, as great a rebel as it is against thee. But hard it is, and dangerous, to mark out precisely the bounds that separate lawful pleasures from forbidden ones. If I listen to my desires, they will extend them far beyond

and all reason ; they will endeavour
persuade me, that whatever is agree-
le cannot be bad. Whether I eat or
ink, whether I sleep or wake, whe-
er I hunger or thirst, whether I be
e or in labour, I am always under
temptation, and in perpetual fear of fal-
g into excess. Thy providence would
ve me pass through all these dangers ;
thou alone art capable of conducting
e securely through so hard and difficult
way. O let thy spirit lead me forth
o the smooth way, and suffer me not
turn unto the right, nor to the left.
ere are two extremities to avoid ; thou
horrest carnal pleasures, but it may
too, thou lovest not excessive auste-
es ; *bodily exercise profiteth but little ;*
godliness hath the promises of the pre-
sent life, and of that which is to come. I
ow, my God, that it is more dangerous
fall into one excess than the other.
thou say'st of bodily exercise is this,
it is profitable but to few things ;
for the other excess, to wit, of plea-
es, it spoils every thing, it ravages
conscience, fullies the heart, ruins
the

the body, grieves the holy spirit, and separates the soul from thee, my God. It is incomparably the surest therefore to renounce pleasures in general, than to chuse out some particular ones, exposing one's self thereby to the danger of chusing some unlawful ones. O thou that holdest in thy hand the hearts of Men, and the rivers of waters, direct thou mine in this surest way, in which I may be certain not to offend thee, and that is, the privation of all sensual pleasures. Take from me the relish of these joys, which I am enchanted: Pluck from this devil of pleasure the mask that covers him, and that false beauty that charms me, that I may see all its deformities, that I may fly them and have them in abhorrence. Since the body thou obligest me to drag along, to nourish and to preserve, obliges me to actions that are joyn'd with pleasure, give me the grace to do those actions to satisfy necessity, and not to serve my pleasures. Discover to me the snares that concupiscence lays under the veil of necessity; suffer me not to make that

cessary

efflary by an evil habit, which is super-
 nous by the laws of nature and of rea-
 on; that my soul, under thy guidance,
 may keep my body as its slave, and not
 obey it as its master.

CHAP. IV.

*That we ought not to consult our Heart
 and our Senses in the choice of Pleasures.
 That Devotion leads to true Pleasures.*

WE believe that to the obtaining
 any thing, one must ask a great-
 al more than one desires to obtain;
 and that to withdraw Men from their
 errors, it is good to carry them a lit-
 to the other extream; to the end,
 at in returning, they may at least con-
 ue in a reasonable mid-way. This is
 at, it may be, hath set so many Chri-
 an Authors and Preachers on imitating
 the Stile of the Stoicks, in discoursing
 the nature of Pleasure and Pain.
 these People tell us that Pain is not
 Evil, nor Pleasure a Good. One may

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be compleatly happy, say they, in *Phalaris* his Burning-Bull, and compleatly miserable amidst the greatest Pleasures. This Method is not, it may be, so good as they imagine. It mightily discourages the Mind to require of it too much, and one can persuade to nothing, when one cloaths the Truth in Paradoxes ; for they but awaken the Curiosity, and bewilder the Mind. After all, one cannot persuade Men contrary to what they feel. *Tully* tells us of a Philosopher that was blinded in this matter as far as any of the rest, by the pompous Reasonings of his Sect, but a great defluxion of Rheum upon his Eyes, which caused him a horrible deal of pain, prevail'd over the illusions of his Philosophy, and made him quit it. When we see one of these wise Men lying on his Bed cruelly tormented with the Gout and Stone, and hear him cry out, *'Tis to no purpose O pain, for thou shalt never make me confess thou art an Evil* ; One could not but look upon this as a Comedy, and a piece of profound Hypocrisy. Reason can do nothing against Experience, and
especial

specially a Sense so quick as that of
 Pain. I can conceive very well how
 the Martyrs were happy amidst their
 Punishments, because they felt not all
 their Pains. For I believe their Souls,
 by the help of God's Grace, were so
 fully possess'd with the hopes of Glory,
 and the Crown they were near upon re-
 ceiving, that there was no place left
 for any other Sentiments. The patience
 of the Faithful in their Sufferings pro-
 ceeds, in my Opinion, from nothing
 else, but that their Souls being fix'd on God
 and Heaven, the Objects of their Hope,
 detach themselves partly from their
 Bodies, and less attended to their Pain.
 Patience on the other hand is the
 Motion of a Soul, that turns it self in-
 wardly towards the Body, to abandon it
 to Grief, and to feel it fully. I con-
 sider then, that Pain is an Evil; and this
 acknowledging, that bodily Pleasure is a Good.
 I think I owed this Confession to those
 that would oblige us to renounce the
 Pleasures of the Senses, to the end, I
 may have them, by this Sincerity, the
 more attentive to my Reasonings.

We do not solicit them to renounce the pleasures of the Body, as evil in themselves, but as an inconsiderable good, that draws after in an incredible train of Mischiefs, and as a Good unworthy of a Man that's born for nobler Pleasures, and design'd for the possession of much greater Goods. We shall never be able to rid the Mind of Man, do what we will, of the Opinion, that Felicity consists in Pleasure. I would not dispute this Maxim. The supreme Happiness consists undoubtedly in possessing of the supreme Good, and in this possession the Soul feels a supreme Pleasure; and they may call if they will this supreme Pleasure the supreme Felicity of Man. But Men suffer themselves thereupon to be terribly illudged. They persuade themselves that the Soul is not capable of any true Pleasure but what it derives from the Body. Among the common People, a spiritual Pleasure and a chimerical Pleasure, is the same thing. All such as make their Happiness consist in Contemplation, and Actions wholly different from those that

create us carnal pleasures, pass in the World for meer visionaries. This error is caused by the Senses and the Heart; wherefore I say, that in the Judgment we should make on pleasures, and the choice of them, we ought not to consult either our Heart or Senses. I say, this error is caused by the Senses and by the Heart; because they think nothing is agreeable but what is agreeable to them. We judge things good or evil by the reference they have to our senses, to which they bring or pain or pleasure, therefore the Heart and Senses which are bodily, cannot be touch'd by things spiritual; they imagine they cannot be pleasant, because they feel not the pleasure. Just as a blind Man, if he would judge according to his senses, would undoubtedly judge there was no such thing as colour, or if there was, it could make no impression of delight on the Soul. This is an illusion that must be removed.

First then, we must remember, that Man is made up of two parts, the Soul and the Body, each of these two has its distinct goods; the goods of the Soul are spiritual,

spiritual, those of the Body are necessarily corporeal. Of these two parts, the Soul is infinitely the more excellent, and properly *the Man*, and the body belongs to this Man, and by consequence the goods and pleasures that belong to the Soul by it self, are infinitely greater than those that accrew to it by the mediation of the Body. In short, it is easy to comprehend why the Heart and Senses judge otherwise; they are bodily faculties, and 'tis no wonder that they hold for things bodily. The senses with regard to this are out of dispute; they are corporeal both in their organs, and in their operations. 'Tis no less true of the Heart that it is bodily; for by the Heart I understand the seat of the passions and imagination; 'tis evident, that both these faculties are corporeal. The Imagination is, for 'tis the place where those Images that come to us from the senses meet, and offer themselves to our Minds when their true Objects are away: The Passions are also corporeal, for they are form'd and made by motions purely mechanical; and this we see by the Characters they impress

press on the Body; such as are the motion of the Blood, quick, slow, or precipitated, the paleness or redness of the Complexion, the fire or faintness they impress on the Eyes: The Senses therefore, and the Heart, which are bodily, being the gates by which objects enter our Souls, they carry with them none but corporeal Images, and cause in it none but sensual pleasures; and the Soul gets a habit of believing that there are no other, because it never tries to unloose it self from the Body, or taste any thing besides. But is it possible we should believe our Senses in so important a matter, against our interest and against our reason? The Senses are not capable of knowing the thousandth part of what belongs to Bodies. As soon as a Body ceases to have any considerable extension, we cease to see and feel it; and would we make these Senses judges of things absolutely spiritual? In good truth, the Soul is miserable and slave enough, if it cannot taste that pleasure which is its sovereign happiness, but by the assistance of the Body: If matter
be

be the source of true pleasure, what shall those Souls do that are separated from matter? What can be the happiness of Angels who have no Body? Is it not true, that their pleasures should as far transcend ours, as Spirits are above matter? Spiritual pleasures come undoubtedly from the understanding of the truth, from the practice of virtue, from our union with God by the bonds of our love for him, and from that action by which God does immediately unite himself to our Souls. All this is absolutely above our Senses: They know not the truth; for their office is only to report the appearances of Bodies; they cannot judge of Virtue, 'tis not of their cognisance; and much less can they judge of that mutual union betwixt God and the Soul. Thus though they give us no intelligence of all these affairs, yet we ought not to doubt, but that these make real impressions on our Souls.

But whence comes it, say some, that spiritual pleasures are not so affecting, and make not such powerful impressions

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in the Soul, as corporeal pleasures do? For do you not see, say they, religious persons in such transports of joy and pleasure, as we see men have in the enjoyments of their sensual pleasures: And is not this a proof that these spiritual pleasures are but imaginary ones, or at least that they are very languid? This difficulty arises hence, that we know not how to distinguish the Body from the Soul; we believe it is affected proportionably to the greatness of the agitation of its bodily Organs; and persuade ourselves that it cannot receive an impression of joy, but by the mediation of these great bodily Motions. But 'tis not so. It is certain, that those great pleasures which the Soul receives from the Body, it receives by the rapid motion of the Blood and Spirits; but the pleasures of the Saints, which are included in the Soul itself, and which discover no outward Tokens, yet fail not to make very great impressions: These joys are so great and so affecting, that they transport the Soul beyond it self, and out of the world. It must needs be, that the joy that comes from

from our possessing God, from the knowledge of his truth, the imitation of his Vertues, and Excellencies, must needs be infinitely above all sensual joys. Since for their sakes, we do not only renounce all bodily pleasure, but expose our selves to all the most sensible torments imaginable. 'Tis true, the more the Soul is accustomed to let it self be moved by those agitations that cause corporeal pleasures and passions, the less capable it is of tasting spiritual and inward Joy. And this is one of the greatest evils arising from the continual use of corporeal pleasures. The Soul waxeth fat, as the Holy Ghost speaks, and lightly esteems the rock of its salvation. It cloaths it self, as one may say, with flesh and blood, and no longer relishes any thing but what flatters this flesh and blood. Wherefore, of all the pleasures of the Senses, we have only permitted our truly devout person those which are qualified. The Senses love to receive strong impressions from their objects, provided they be not hurt thereby; and the greatest bodily pleasure is that, whose motions are

strong

rong that they come very near to pain ;
 wit, tickling. The imagination also
 ves to be strongly moved ; but all these
 preffions are so strong upon the Soul,
 at it can hardly come to it self again ;
 and therefore we ought carefully to
 void them.

But if we want more sensible proofs,
 at the Heart, the Passions and Senses,
 ould not be consulted in the choice of
 easures, hearken to experience, see
 e disorders of the world. They are
 e effects of this blindness of mens un-
 derstandings, that follow the directi-
 s of their hearts and senses in their
 oice of pleasures. How came our
 other *Eve* to venture on the forbidden
 uit ? because it was fair and pleasant
 the sight : She hearkned to her Heart
 d Senses. How come Corruptions to
 high a pitch in the world, that it
 nstrained the justice of God to bring
 horrible flood upon the earth ? because
 sons of God saw the daughters of
 n, they found them beautiful, they
 at their ears to the voice of God that
 ke unto them. They listned to the
 sollicitations

solicitations of their Senses and their Hearts, they took these Women of the world, and became corrupted with them. How came *David* to commit Adultery and Murder in so short a time? He listened to his Heart and Senses, and let himself be led away by his passions? How came *Solomon* to be an Idolater? Because his criminal affections to his Wives, having blinded him, separated him from God, and shut the ears of his soul and understanding. Lastly, Why did St. Peter deny his Master? Because his Heart, his Senses, and his Imagination, caused him to see an instant and terrible death, and he consulted neither God nor his reason?

It may be thought that we here could find the innocent and guilty, when we speak of our Heart and Senses, the common sources of our errors; because the senses seem to be unfortunate and not criminal: 'Tis true, the senses are subject to two misfortunes: The first is, to be forced to take in objects that are criminal, and capable of carrying corruption to our hearts, such as are

example

examples, scandalous words and actions; and the second is, that they receive innocent objects, and sometimes in an innocent manner, and the images taint and corrupt in the heart. However, I think, we cannot separate the senses from the heart; they make but one and the same whole. 'Tis a match, at the extremes of which there is a heap of gunpowder and Brimstone fastned. The heart and imagination are the inward end of the match, they are the magazine of powder; the senses are the other extremity, to which the objects set fire. This fire glides, or rather flies along the match, and sets the heart and imagination on a flame; and therefore the holy Ghost put for the same thing, *To walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thy eyes.*

In a word, if we would be perfectly assured that the heart and senses are bad counsellors in this affair; hear what the holy Scriptures say to it: They consider our heart as the source of all our evils; *the thoughts of mens hearts are only evil continually. It is deceitful above all things and*

and desperately wicked, who can know it? From the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, these are the things which defile a man. The holy Ghost represents the heart as a blind Man, environ'd with a thick cloud and great darkness. It speaks of it even as of a dead thing, it is earthly, sensual. How can a heart thus made be judge of what are true pleasures, and truly good things? How can any good thing proceed from so empoison'd a Spring? So the wise Man puts this maxim amongst those that we should hate — *Walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.*

I would end here, if it were not necessary to remove a Scandal, that some may take at what I have said; that sensual pleasure is a good, and good too for the Soul. For in short, if the Soul be the only thing that feels and which relishes pleasure, and that pleasure is a good, 'tis the good of the Soul. If it is a good, 'twill be said, then we should seek after it, and love it. It will not be sufficient

efficient to answer, that 'tis a good of the body only ; that is not true, absolutely speaking ; 'tis in some sort a good of the Soul, since 'tis the Soul that requires it : Farthermore, although it were only a good of the body, yet would it not therefore necessarily be unlawful ; for 'tis not always forbid us to seek the good of the body : But we must not only consider a thing in it self, to know whether it be good or evil, but consider it in its causes and effects, in that which comes before, and that which follows. I should have the pleasure that comes to the Soul by the Body, be a kind of good, considered in it self ; look on it in its source, and see what it produces. The source is sin, and 'tis impurity, 'tis rebellion against the laws of the creator. That which it brings forth, is the separating the Soul from God ; 'tis an engagement with death, 'tis pain and sorrow, and everlasting horror. How can we conceive, under the notion of good, a thing that is encompass'd with so many moral impurities, and so many real miseries ? If corporeal pleasure may be call'd

call'd a good, with respect to the present sentiment of the Soul, 'tis an evil in every other respect, 'tis an evil absolutely speaking; and therefore wise Men of all Ages have placed it amongst the false goods; for what is truly, and in itself good, must be good on what ever side you behold it.

The Soul hath then no true pleasure but what arises from its union with God; and this union is so much the stronger, by how much the looser we are from things sensible, and unite our selves to God, by divers bonds. The first is by the knowledge of the truth; not of those truths Philosophy searches after but never finds with any certainty; but of those divine truths that Faith discovers to us, those saving truths that are the light of the Soul. *Thy word is a lantern to my feet, and light unto my paths, it enlightens the eyes, and giveth understanding to the simple.* The second Bond that unites us to God, is Virtue the practice of which makes us resemble our Creator, renews his Image in us and makes us to be the copies of that beauty

beauty; of which he is the Original. The third Bond is Love, that love by which we love God, and by which we are beloved of him. By this love he is in us, and we in him; because love makes a transfusion of hearts, and the Soul is more in the object it loves than in that which animates. As to that pleasure that springs from this union, it is of the number of those things that cannot well be conceived by such as have not felt.

It is such, that all the pleasures of the world seem insipid to those who have tasted it. 'Tis so great, that it hath made the Saints that have been extraordinarily affected therewith, to fall into holy extasies, and such ravishments that seem'd to have entirely broken the alliance of the Body to the Soul. Now it is unquestionable that Devotion leadeth to these joys; it diminishes the union betwixt it and sensual things; it detaches from the body, it elevates us to God; it purifies our Souls by bringing them nearer to him; it communicates to them the Rays of that great Sun of Righteousness, and makes them like so many

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little Gods, by partaking the glory of our great God.

MEDITATION.

I am not astonished, O my Soul, that thou seekest for pleasure; thou seekest the good, thou seekest that which thou hast lost, thou seekest that which was given thee, that which thou hast had, and that which thou should'st have had, hadst thou remain'd but innocent. Thy God has made thee just and holy; this holiness was that which united thee to him; thou wast divided from him when thou becamest sinful, and by this separation thou remainest deprived of pleasure and felicity; thou seekest in every thing the good that thou hast lost; but, blind as thou art, thou mistakest shadows for substances; thou leapest over several things, and if thou findest any thing that flatters and tickles thee, thou presently embraces it with as much ardor, as if thou hadst found what thou hadst lost, and was looking for. Thou art indeed disabused of thy mistake in a little time, but 'tis only to fall into another. After thou once hast tasted corporeal pleasure,

pleasure, thou acknowledgest it is not that infinite pleasure thou seekest after. Thou havest that object then, and seekest for another; that thou embracest too, and deceivest thy self continually with new illusions. Cease, O my heart, cease then to wander, and pursue these fantomes; be not thus cheated by thy senses and imagination. Embrace thy God, 'tis he alone to whom thou owest that general inclination, that makes thee love felicity and pleasure; that thy blinded eyes make thee love false goods, and fix thee to false pleasures. If thou wert not exceedingly blind, thou could'st not doubt but God is infinite, and infinitely good, and infinitely better than all the creatures. Thou canst not also doubt but that the pleasure which arises from an union with him, and the possessing him, must be infinitely greater than all the pleasures of the world united. If created things are so sweet, how pleasant must an increated be? The good that is the Author of all other goods, that includes in it self the pleasure of all the rest? The good that spreads abroad in our hearts those delights that are as far above all other joys, as

he himself is above all other beings? Thou art indredulous on this point, O my heart, because thou hast not felt the sweets that spring from an union with God. You cannot believe them. Thou sayest, as Thomas said, *I will not believe unless I see, unless I feel the joys.* Ah! blessed is he that hath believed before he saw, who hath surmounted all temptations of the flesh, and hath desired to taste divine pleasures before he tasted them. But more incomparably happy is he, who hath believed, and who hath seen, and who hath tasted those delights that pass all understanding, that flow from the intimate presence of my God! If thou hast not as yet, my Soul, been able to relish any spiritual delight, it is because thy God hath not been able yet to apply himself immediately to thee; and he could not for reason of the impurities with which thou art covered. For his eyes are pure, and cannot behold any thing unclean: He is purity and light it self; and thou art surrounded with a thick cloud of ignorance and malice. How can God unite himself closely to thee? Remove then, take away this Veil, this partition-wall, cure thy

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ignorance, seek after the knowledge of thy God and his mysteries, purify thy self, remove that filth which covers thee, deliver thy self from those accursed habits of vice that come about thee like a vestment, and God will cloath thee as it were with light. Then thou wilt feel, that the application of sensible objects to thy faculties is not capable of causing in thee a sensation of any such delights as thou may'st have from God. Then thou wilt be thoroughly disgusted at these vain pleasures; thou wilt long to see thy God, to know him, to embrace him, to mix and blend thy self with him, that thou may'st be one with him.

P R A Y E R.

O Father of all light, inexhaustible source of joy and pleasure, insinuate thy self into all the faculties of my Soul, fill thou the space of my desires, and vast extent of my heart, and make me sensible of those joys that thou communicatest to thy saints and favourites. I discover to thee my want, I confess to thee my nothingness, I languish after thee

thee my true and solid good. Without thee, O my God, I should be the miserablest of all creatures; I should be lost in an abyſs of pain and miſery, and feel continual anguiſh and horror: But oh thou refreſheſt me in this vale of tears, thou feedeſt me with the bread of Angels, giveſt drink as out of rivers of delights. The world underſtands not theſe delights, the delicacies of thy heavenly table are to it inſipid; it can taſte nothing but the garlicks and fleſh-pots of *Egypt*, and knows not what is the honey of the land of *Canaan*. I know it, O my God, but I know it not as I would and ought to know it. I have learnt of thy Saints that when thou ſpeakeſt to thy Children after their own hearts, the ſentiment that riſes thereupon is ſweeter than the honey, and the honey-comb; and they find more pleaſure in poſſeſſing thee, than the moſt covetous find in their abundance of Gold and Silver. But alas, my Soul as yet hath never felt thoſe heavenly tranſports! I begin to find and to acknowledge that the pleaſures of this world are incapable of ſatisfying

atisfying that hunger and thirst after felicity and pleasure, which I am labouring for, but have not perfectly attained, O God, who only art capable of quenching my thirst. *O taste and see how good and gracious the Lord is:* I taste thee, as I see thee; I see thee imperfectly, and as in a glass, and I taste thee also as cover'd. Those coverings are not upon thee, for thou art wholly pure and simple, and whoever is pure may taste thee purely; but the veil is in my flesh, or rather 'tis my flesh it self; 'tis my corruption separates me from thee. Come then, Lord Jesus, come; come, spirit creator, and creator of spirits: *Create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me.* O let my soul be filled with thy delights, and let me taste all the sweetness of thy love. I am thirsty after pleasures, open thy self thou fountain of eternal joys, let thy rivers flow into my soul. *Kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth, for thy love is better than wine:* Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest at noon-day; or why should I be as one that turneth aside

aside by the flocks of thy companions. Why should my Soul wander amongst the vain pleasures of the world, and why should it give thee so many false goods for companions? O let me retire under thy shadow, let me embrace thee, worship thee, and love thee only, and taste no joys but in thee. O draw me then that I may run after thee: draw me near to me, that I may draw near to thee; prevent me by thy grace, thy mercy, and by the bowels of thy compassion, yearning for a wandering soul that is in quest of thee, and cannot find thee. *Awake, O north-wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden that the spices may flow out; let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.* Blessed spirit, thou south wind, parent of heat, author of generation, source of love and charity, breathe over the faculties of my soul that are as a desert; make thou an *Eden* of it, garden of the Lord; cause thou to grow up there sweet favouring plants, produce there habits and works of good odour and scent, that my divine

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behaviour, the well-beloved of my Soul,
may come and taste the sweetness of
those fruits; that he may take pleasure
in me, and I may take my pleasure in
him, that we may eternally taste all the
delights and pleasures mutual love can
give.

CHAP. V.

*That young Folks have no Privilege for
the enjoyment of sensual Pleasures, or
to dispense with their Duty of Devo-
tion.*

THERE is one reflexion we must
needs make, before we leave this
weighty Subject: We have not as yet
said any thing in respect to young folks,
and it may be may think that what we
have hitherto said concerns not them.
It is in a manner impossible to deliver
them from this mistake, that pleasure
is their lot, of which they cannot, with-
out a kind of tyranny, be deprived.
Devotion is natural to them: They
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even glory in it: I should make a pretty Figure, say they, to play the bigot at my age. They persuade themselves that modesty, wisdom, sobriety, and temperance do not sit well on them: 'Tis the business, say they, of old people; we should make our selves ridiculous to play the *Seneca's* and *Cato's*. And indeed, if any of them have better inclinations than ordinary, they are ashamed of it, they dissemble it, they follow the crowd. There is a time, they say, for every business under the Sun: If we consider old and young people, one can never believe, that such different persons can be destin'd to the same actions: The wrinkled forehead of old age, the paleness of its hue, its hollow eyes, its sunk mouth, and its trembling limbs, have some agreement with the actions of repentance, it is but reasonable that they should shed tears, and give themselves to mortification: But the brave hail complexion of Youth, that flower of blood that spreads it self over the face, the lively sparkling eyes, the senses so sharp and easily mov'd by their ob-

jects,

cts, make us plainly see, this age was
made for pleasure and delight. And
as it is, they flatter, and thus lull them-
selves: Not the young ones only talk
this gay rate, but most of the world
consent thereto. I will not deny but
that excesses and disorderly conduct
have upon Age a deeper mark of shame
and infamy, than the debauches of
youth. Nay, I will own that the riots
of old age discover a much greater fund
of corruption. It cannot throw its faults
on the boylings and first sallies of its
youth, that throws up its froth and
foam; it cannot have for its excuse the
want of experience. And lastly it breaks
through the barriers of an Ignominy
much greater than that which attends
the crimes of Youth. But however,
I will not judge Men according to
human rules, and the sentiments of the
world. There is no Age that has re-
ceiv'd a dispensation for not paying him
obedience. All violaters of his Laws
shall be punished, because his Com-
mands were given to all; and when the
difference of Age may make a diversity

of faults in respect of the Punishments, yet this will only cause, that some will be more and some less: But alas! the less miserable shall have sufficient reason to bewail their case; for the least miserable shall have for their inheritance eternal Flames, and a Worm that never dies.

Why should young persons be under less obligations to Devotion? Hath God given less unto them? nay sure, they have receiv'd of God, as well as their Elders, their Being and their Reason, but withal they have more vigour of Body, more strength of Mind, Health, Youth, and the flower of Age. These certainly are more particular Obligations on them to the serving of God. They have not received all these advantages, to devote them unto the God of pleasure and concupiscence. Is that too good for God? They devote to him a body worn out, corrupted lungs, eyes quite extinguished, and dry and useless members. In truth, God will be much oblig'd to them; they will give him the dregs of their age, and consecrate to him that time, that is the

sink of life, and centre of all miseries;
 that is to say, they will give him that,
 which the world cares no longer for;
 they will do like the covetous, bestow
 their liberalities when they are dying;
 and give what they can keep no longer.
 Believe me, all and the best we have is
 not too good for God. He would not
 heretofore have any victims, that had
 any blemish, or were sick and languish-
 ing, or had lost a limb. Do we think
 he will accept the offering of a heart
 worn out, and of a Man that is but a
 shadow of what he once was? *I ex-*
hort you to present your bodies a living sa-
crifice. But those young folks who
 make a resolution to be devout, when
 they can sin no longer, promise to God
 dead and corrupted carcasses. For so
 the bodies of old Men are rather to be
 call'd. God hath thought nothing too
 good for us; he gave himself for us, and
 to us; he who is the sovereign good, he
 gave us his Son, and devoted him to
 death for us in the flower of his age; and
 is but just that we in every age should
 be devoted to his service.

God

God is not satisfied with promises of things to come, *I will give*; he would have us speak in present terms, and say, *I give*; for so he speaks himself, *I give you my peace*; he calls himself, he that *was*, and *is*, and *is to come*; to him belong the differences of time, past, present, and to come: But of all times he prefers the present, and he says,, *I am he that am*, or *he that is*, and not he that will be. Now he that would be like to God, and would please him, should speak like him; *I am* he that *is* just, holy, separated from sinners, devoted to God, dedicated to his service, and not he that will be. Thou canst not answer for the future, scarcely canst thou answer for the present.

God heretofore required our first fruits, and the firstlings of the flock, and even the first born Children: *Abraham* rose early in the morning to go and sacrifice his Son: And God commanded a never-dying fire to be kept in his temple, for the continual sacrifice of the morning as well as the evening. This signifies that God would be serv'd first, and

that our earliest steps should be consecrated to him ; he would not have us say to him, *Come and follow me*, if the world leaves any thing, that thou shalt have. He can't endure those folks that have the insolence to say, *Suffer me first to go and bury*, &c. He answers them, *Go, let the dead bury their dead, come thou and follow me.* For he that *lays his hands upon the plow, and then looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God.*

There are no people in the world that do not in good earnest own, that it is necessary, once in one's life, to think upon God ; the dispute then is only about the time. Some say, I will become a good Christian, when I have built my house ; and others, when I have made my fortune ; and the younger say, when I am old, when I have tasted the pleasures of life. All, in a word, remit this grand matter to the time to come. Now since 'tis owned by all, that 'tis of absolute necessity to dedicate one's self to God, and that without doing so hell and eternal death are unavoidable, is it not the most extravagant madness in

in the world to act thus, and to remind an affair of this importance to a future time, for which no mortal Man can answer? O Youth, thou idolizer of delights, wilt thou thy self never profit by the example of that wretched rich Man in the Gospel, that said over-night to his soul, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* And yet that very night, his soul, that was so ill-advised, was required of him. Who hath assur'd thee, that thou shalt arrive to an old age? Or have you been treating with God, that in whatever state death shall surprize you, heaven shall receive you? If death should meet you, covered with sins, just coming from the play or ball, the tavern, a debauch, or from a worse place, do you think you shall have right to say at the gate of heaven, Lord, Lord, open to us? You will have for answer, *I never knew ye, depart from me ye that work iniquity.* Then you will doubtless say, *we have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and are not worthy to be called thy sons;* but pardon us, and impute all

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all our offences to our youth. This will
not avail, God will not, in favour of
youth, make void that unalterable de-
ree, *Nothing unclean shall enter into my
city.*

The Jewish Doctors, who do not of-
ten say good things, are used to say,
*remember thy God, and turn to him but
the day before thou dieft.* This is well
said: Think then on God to day, for, it
may be, thou shalt die to morrow. What
are we doing, I desire to know, when
we dispose of time to come, and say,
to morrow we will join in such a party
of pleasure, and the week following we
will debauch; we'll live at this rate 'till
we are about fifty or fixty, and then
we'll think of retiring to dedicate our
lives to God? We truly imitate those
ambitious, visionary Princes, that in
hopes of conquering, do already share
out provinces, and bestow great Go-
vernments; they give what is none of
theirs. To whom belongs the time to
come? To God undoubtedly, who keeps
it as it were in cisterns, and lets it run
out as seems good to him; who stops
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the spring or lengthens its course. And thus when we distribute time to come we bestow a gift of God's; at least we give and design to several uses, the which as yet is none of ours, and may be, never will. And this is the greatest folly, even according to the several maxims of the world: 'Tis by an old proverb call'd *selling the Lion's and Bear's skin, before you have caught them.*

Since 'tis absolutely necessary to devote one's self to God, should we not do it, when 'tis easiest so to do? And to maintain, 'tis easier to love God and turn to him in one's youth, than in old age. This seems to be a paradox, because in youth the blood is boiling, the flesh vigorous, and sin sticks to our heart and entrails, and one takes most delight in the pleasures of the world. 'Tis true indeed, when once the reins are loose to concupiscence in youth, 'tis almost impossible to stop its sallies and transports: We must drain its force before we put an end to its disorder. But when one has the happiness to turn early to God and goodness, 'tis sure that

one succeeds incomparably better therein than in old age. Wherever youth are carried, they are commonly carried with violence and great ardor. 'Tis the temperament of their age. And if they can but guide these first kindlings, it will come to an excellent zeal, and holy fervour of devotion; as they, who know how to manage the rapidity of torrents and rivers exuberantly, make them turn mills, and machines of great benefit to mankind. On the contrary, experience teaches us, And that devotion cools with age, and that old people have often a good deal of pain to give new warmth to their hearts in the exercises of devotion. Their souls are hardened as it were, they are no longer touched or moved with that ease as formerly, because they are not so tender as they were; the fire of zeal are less to be diminish'd with their natural heat.

Whence come these difficulties in the work of men's conversions? Surely, there is not one but increases with age. This difficulty of thinking on God comes certainly from custom and habit. Now custom

custom in time becomes a tyrant. It comes from the devil; and when it hath once establish'd its tyranny by long possession, it is in a manner impossible to root it out. It comes alone at first, but in a little time it is call'd legion. And that devil which one might have driven away with a, *Get thee behind me Satan* can now be neither cast out by prayer nor by fasting; and the difficulty comes likewise from hence, that the faculties wear out, and the soul loses its strength; it is no longer capable of undertaking such a vigorous enterprise, as that of turning to God, and breaking with sin. Lastly, it comes from hence, that God is weary of calling, and inviting, and offering his grace. 'Tis all past, his patience turns into a just fury. when it hath been long abused.

But above all, let us consider, how powerful habits of debauchery and luxury grow, when we permit them to take rooting, and grow up even to old age. That young plant, which with one finger might have been pull'd up, becomes a trunk of mighty thickness, and strong enough

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withstand the hatchet. This little monster, the love of pleasure, that one might easily have strangled at its birth, becomes so great and terrible, that one cannot attack or engage it. Sins become not only stronger by age, their number also increases. They are like snow-balls, that gain by every roll. They are like torrents that swell, as they move from their springs; it had been easy at first to pass them on foot, but afterwards 'tis hard to swim them over. Now the number of sins multiplying, increases the difficulty of devotion and conversion. We read in the lives of the holy fathers, that an angel one day showed an hermit see, in vision, a certain old man cutting down wood in a forest to make up a burthen, with design to carry it away; when the bundle was exceeding great, he attempted to heave it up on his shoulders; but finding it too heavy, he let it fall to the ground, and went to cutting more wood, and added it to his burthen; after which he tried again to lift it up, but found it much more impracticable than before. But still

still letting this down, he fell to adding more wood, and this he did several times. The solitary hermit wonder'd at the folly of this old man; the Angel answered and said, Do you observe well that old Man : he is the emblem of the worldly-minded ; they heap up sins on sins ; a purpose of lifting themselves up to heaven comes between ; some attempts they make towards it ; but they quickly sink beneath the burthen of their sins ; then they begin again to commit new faults, as though the burthen by increasing would grow lighter ; and when they have carried thir disorders on a great way further, then comes a fresh desire of devoting their selves to God ; but the burthen of their sins becomes much greater, and their raising their souls up, consequently, much more difficult. This story was made for our present subject, and against those wretched men that consecrate their youth to the pleasures of this world, and remit the practice of devotion, and the raising up their souls to heaven to another time.

St. *Austin*, explaining the story of *Lazarus's* resurrection, asks why our Saviour used sighs, and tears, and prayers, and loud cries for raising him up, which had not used for the other dead persons had restored to life? Why 'twas, says he, because he had been dead four days. Our Lord would hereby give us an idea of the difficulty that is found in the conversion of a sinner, when he is set and confirmed in his sins. The first, saith the father, is the day of pleasure, when we relish sin; the second, that of consent; the third, that of love and attachment to the delights of sin; the fourth, is that of custom and habit. When once the man is come to this, he cannot be converted to God, he cannot be received but by cries and tears, and the voice of our Lord that worketh wonders. This methinks should make us sensible of the interest we have in making upon God betimes, and consecrating our first years to devotion. I know very well, that the end crowns the work; but I know also, that 'tis of utmost importance to begin well, to
 end

end happily. An arrow that flies wide from the designed mark, when it goes out from the bow, will be found at a mighty distance from it before all its force is at an end. A man, who in his youth plunges himself into debauchery, and gives himself wholly up to sensual pleasures, will find himself at a dreadful distance from God, in his old age; and it will be very difficult to bring him back so far. Wherefore I conclude with the wise man, *Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth.*

MEDITATION.

Why dost thou hesitate my soul, after thy reflections? Dost thou not perceive the necessity of consecrating thyself immediately to the service of thy God? Thou criest continually, to morrow; but that to morrow never comes, and the day of thy separation from thy body will come in the hour when least thou lookest for it. When God calls, thou sayst unto him, as the sluggard says, presently, presently, let me alone a-while, a minute longer, but this presently never comes.

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 I see very well, that 'tis grievous to
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cut off from him many years of that certain short life, of which thou hast the use but whilst he pleases. It may be thou wilt say, that 'twere not unjust thy time should be divided betwixt thy God and thyself; but that 'tis very hard to give away one hath, without reserving anything to one's self. But dost thou not consider that thy God gives thee everything? He hath given thee the heavens, the earth, the fields, the rivers, floods, plants, trees, and fruits; hath he reserv'd ought to himself. Has he not given even himself entirely to thee? Hath he not given thee his son, nay, hath he not even given himself to suffer death for thee? Would'st thou not therefore be ingrateful, O my heart, if thou should'st think to divide with God, and take from him any thing thou hast? But ah, my soul, when thou thinkest, and talkest at this rate, thou understandest not thy interest. Thou presupposest that thou lovest thyself, whatever time thou givest to thy God; and only savest the hours thou devote'st to thyself; all the rest is thrown away, and lost in the vast abyss of time past. But the moment

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thou bestowest on God are laid up in store,
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 pear before thee, and be put in the great
 account, at the day of judgment, and thou
 shalt receive for them an eternity of glory.
 Be no longer then in suspense, my soul, re-
 nounce immediately all the pleasures, all
 the hopes of the world, to follow thy God
 only. With him is the fountain of life,
 in his light shall we see light, and be
 abundantly satisfied with the fatness of
 his house, and drink of the river of his
 pleasures. Thou wilt not regret in thy
 old age, the loss of thy youth; thy days will
 not rise in judgment against thee, to con-
 demn thee. When thou shalt be old, and
 near the grave, the thinking on thy God
 will cause no terror in thee; thou wilt not
 look upon him as a judge, that will come to
 thee and demand an account of so many
 years consum'd in vain pleasures, but as a
 Father that will come to break thy
 sins, and as a rewarder, that comes to
 give thee days of refreshment, for all the
 sorrowful and painful years that the world
 has made thee endure.

P R A Y E R.

O God, conductor of my youth, light of the blind, teacher of the ignorant, who enlightenest the simple, who bringest back the wanderers into the true way, and who drawest thy praises from the mouth of babes, teach me thy path and draw me from the ways of this world. Hast thee, that I may hasten to leave me no longer in the world and in sin. O my Lord, and my God, cause by the infusion of thy grace into my soul, that my heart may desire thee, that in desiring it may seek after thee, that in seeking it may find thee, that finding thee may love thee, that in loving thee may find a supreme joy. I have already wasted too much time in vain desires. I have a mind to come unto thee, but I find not strength to vanquish those habits in which I am engaged by custom. Come then, my God, and snatch me from the arms of pleasure, suffer no longer my delays, and when I say unto thee, yet a little while, wait a little longer

longer ; then draw me by thy powerful
word, and say, *Awake thou that sleepest,*
and arise from the dead, and Christ shall
give thee light. If words are not effectual
enough to raise me, touch the bier,
smite the body in which my soul is bu-
ried ; 'tis its cradle or its tomb, there
it sleeps, or there 'tis dead : Sensual
pleasures stupify it or kill it ; smite
this body then, that the soul may a-
wake, for *it is better that I enter into*
life with one eye, than having two, be
cast into hell-fire. 'Tis better that my
flesh should suffer here below some pains,
and that my soul should taste hereafter
those endless joys thou hast prepared
for it above. I dwell in *Sodom*, and I
like my dwelling : Thou wouldest fain
send thy Angels to deliver me from
thence, thy word and ministers to bring
me out, before that day of terror comes,
in which thou wilt pour down upon
the cursed world, torrents of fire and
brimstone ; but I ever find pretexts to
delay. O pluck me therefore by the
hand, withdraw me by the power of
thy grace, that I perish not with the
wicked,

wicked. Shew me the way unto thy holy hill, that I may from thence without danger look upon the deluges of corruption that overflow the country, and the torrents of thy vengeance that lay the world in ruins. Alas, my God, had I but pleased thee to let me taste the spiritual delights of thy love, I should not be sensible of the pleasures of the world and should not stay so long from seeking thee; for I desire most earnestly to be happy. If then I had known my felicity is in thee, I should fly to find in thee the felicity that I sought after. O Lord, since pleasure is the only loadstone capable of attracting my soul, make me taste a little of that joy that I should find in thee, let me feel thy infinite goodness that I may run after thee without delay and seek thee with the eagerness of a hart that desires the living waters of a fountain, to quench the violent thirst with which it is burnt.

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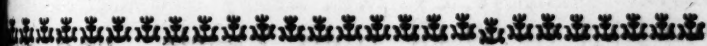
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THE
THIRD PART.

Of the Helps that may lead to Devotion.



CHAP. I.

The first general Advice; to Will, Desire, and Ask it.



WE have seen from how many sources indevotion rises; let us now try to overcome these difficulties by such counsels that may lead us to devotion; the counsels that I will give hereupon, are either general or particular. But before I go any farther, I must propose, that he whom I would bring to devotion, is of himself well inclin'd. It will be to no purpose for him that is not so disposed to go any farther. How many irreligious persons have we in the world,

world, who desire not devotion for themselves, and who despise it in others. And yet there are some of this sort that are persuaded they have a religion. I am, say they, it may be, as religious as another, although I make a jest of devotion, and devout people. If they believe what they say, they are certainly cheated by their own hearts, and we must acknowledge these men are truly profane. Others there are, that esteem devotion in others, but yet regard it not for themselves; it agrees not with the spirit of the world, which these men idolize; they approve of devotion, and admire it, but for their own parts, they think they may be saved with less trouble. I know not whether these are better than the former, but that they are one step nearer the disposition we seek after. But alas, their conscience is yet in a very bad state! They are in this worse than the others, that they fight against their mind; they know the master's Will and do it not. They are afraid of doing too much; provided they may be saved, they regard not how

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What notion! does not paradise deserve to be purchas'd at the expence of some tears, some prayers, some hours of humiliation? How can we think of gaining heaven at the lowest price, since 'tis so difficult to be gotten at any? *If the righteous can scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?* Believe me, O ye lukewarm souls, that a truly devout person has too much righteousness to open himself a way to heaven? know ye not that all the world commends that saying of *St. Austin, Woe to the most laudable life, if it be examin'd without mercy!* and that of *David, If thou should'st be extream to mark what is gone amiss, Lord, who may abide it!* If these devout persons have not too much righteousness, you certainly will be found wanting, you who lag so far behind: but God, you say, will supply what is wanting in you; 'tis for this that Christ shed, to wit, to perfect his grace amidst our infirmities. Ah! how do you know that Jesus Christ will do this? Does he bestow this grace when and where he pleases? You ought therefore to take

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the surest side. What assurance have you, that God thus bestows his grace to those who despise it? Do you what possibly you can, God's mercy will have enough to do, and your righteousness, though carried as far as all your strength will bear you, will have need enough of assistance to attain to his glory.

Other irreligious persons there are who yet are a step nearer than the former; they would willingly enough have devotion, but they are not arriv'd so far as to the desiring it, that is, the motions of their will are very imperfect. I would be devout, they cry, but I cannot; the world carries me off, my affairs take me up, my temper or my mind hinders not that turn that's necessary to the practice of this virtue: I do that which I would not, and do not that which I would; for the law of my members is stronger than the law of my understanding. They are not much troubled at not having what they desire; and that's a manifest proof that they desire it very weakly. O how far are consciences

this estate from perfection! This is not to love God with all our hearts, 'tis to seek him by halves, and to desire him with a very imperfect will. Thus to desire devotion, is to take the way never to obtain it; for the soul surmounts these difficulties only by stiffly standing up against them, and acting with all its vigour: Judge, if a heart thus slothful can obtain even any thing that is difficult in this world. We have seen how many powerful passions destroy devotion; the love of the world, its pleasures, and its troubles; if to these so violent passions you oppose imperfect languid wishes, you will be setting dwarfs to encounter giants. The first advice therefore that I give for the obtaining devotion, is *to desire it earnestly*. 'Twill be said perhaps, that those who desire it have it already. This does not necessarily follow. There are many movements of which we are not masters, and oftentimes we passionately wish for something that we cannot do, so it depends upon our own will. The tyranny of habits is terrible, and the bands of sin are hard to break. *St. Austin*

divinely paints these movements of a soul, that would raise it self to God, but cannot. *I sighed, O my God, after this freedom of thinking but on thee only ; but I sigh'd being still held fast, not by fetters but by my own will, that was harder than any iron. The devil kept it in his power, he made a chain thereof and bound me in it. I had indeed a will to serve thee with a love all pure, and to enjoy thee, my God in whom alone true solid joys are to be found ; but this new will, that did but just bud out, was not able to overpower the other, that was strengthened in evil by long habit.* This is the true picture of a christian soul, which desires to be devout, which would think only on God, and love him only, and cannot. Nevertheless how happy is such a soul, and how near is it to devotion. When one seeks after God, one is just upon the finding him. It is this hunger and thirst after righteousness, which our Lord assures a blessed satisfaction. These desires are the effects of grace, and if nature does nothing in vain, assuredly grace does not : These desires

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then cannot be frustrated, they shall obtain their end, they shall one day be satisfied. There is scarce any thing but what the vigour of the soul, and the force of desires compass. It was by this way, rather than the strength of armies, that *Alexander* overcame the world, vanquish'd so many people, took so many cities, and gain'd so many battles. When things necessary to the accomplishing his designs fail'd him, the vigour of his courage, that is to say, the force of his desires supplied their place. If desires can do such mighty matters on things that are without, and independent on our wills, what can they not effect on that which dependeth on our selves, and is no other thing but our will it self?

To give success to these good desires we must call God to their assistance. They are children he hath brought forth, and which he is concern'd to feed. Devotion is the morning of that sun, that fails not to shine out full, if he be but call'd upon ardently. This then is another advice, which is but the consequence of

of the foregoing one; we must ask of God the grace of devotion, and sigh before him that we have it not. If there be any gift that comes to us immediately from heaven, it is this virtue; for there is nothing purer, nor more elevated among the christian virtues. *If any of you lack wisdom, saith St. James, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* I know not if there be any part of christian wisdom more desirable than this. We ask of God our daily bread, our food and raiment, the health of our bodies, and the cure of our distempers. The soul is very sick, very poor and ready to starve, when it is deprived of Devotion, which is its fire, its soul and its life. Finally, there is nothing to which we can more certainly apply the promise of St. James, That God refuseth none, but gives to all men liberally; for that's the prayer of the world that is most acceptable to him, since it tends intirely to his glory and our own salvation. We desire of God, that he would come into us, that we all

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may dwell in him, and by this mutual tie be perfectly united; How can this but be pleasing to God, since our Lord Jesus Christ, the model of our actions and our thoughts, hath asked the same already for us? *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.*

This should have been our first advice; and with this the good man ought to begin his work. For if we can do nothing without God, which has no relation to him, how should we do without him, what absolutely depends on him and terminates in him?

M E D I T A T I O N.

I consult my heart, to know if I can say with any truth; My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord. Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee, in a barren and dry land where no water is. Oh when shall I enter in and appear before the presence of God!

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But alas, I do not find in my self such thoughts; I find a great dryness, and an almost general privation of the graces of heaven; I there only meet with some languishing desires, that die in the moment of their birth. My faith is wavering, my charity is cold, my hope is weak, my zeal is half extinguished, and my devotion lukewarm. Awake then, O my soul, to day, if thou would'st be united to thy God; if thou would'st love and be beloved of him; if thou would'st have him kindle in thee the pure flames of devotion, thou must desire it, and must ask it earnestly. This good, this great good, will very well deserve, that thou should'st make the first step, and that thou should'st go before him. Say not, my heart, that thou art bound by thy accursed chains, and that thy flesh and blood calls thee still back, and persuades thee otherwise; that thou would'st fain be good, but canst not; that thou desirest it this moment, but canst not desire it long. Alas, my soul, if thou wert thus willing, the thing would be done; the chains of thy will are voluntary chains; thy bonds are evil habits and engagements of corruption,

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corruption, that are so far from extenuating thy fault, that they increase it. In these kind of things we do all that we will, and when we do not what we will, it is because we will it with a very imperfect will.

P R A Y E R.

My good father, and my merciful saviour! I perceive well that I am not truly devout, because I will not to be so. But oh, however voluntary the bonds are that tie my will to evil, and particularly to indevotion, they are not the less strong, nor less indissoluble. My corruption is in my will, and therefore I cannot vanquish it by my will only: Thy grace is sufficient, but without it I can do nothing. Come then, come, my deliverer, break thou these chains under whose weight I groan. I will not let thee go before thou blestest me. *Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.* Let thy spirit of liberty support me. It will be no little purpose for me to seek for aid and counsel to help my devotion; without

out thee, resolutions ever want success and counsels are useless. We may guard cities, and build houses; if thou dost not watch, if thou dost not put thy hand thereto, all our diligence and all our labours would be in vain. Hear my prayers, O my God, let not my meditations be fruitless. Animate thy divine word with thy holy spirit, that it may embrace my heart as a fire, and that I may quickly be delivered from those wretched coldnesses which trouble and torment me, to the end that I may be filled with devotion as I should wish to be.

CHAP. II.

The second general Advice; to lead a holy Life in the practice of all Virtues.

WE have already said something of the necessity of living well and the becoming truly devout; but the subject is of too great importance to stop there. Let us then consider, that there

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can be no stricter union than that betwixt God and a faithful soul, in acts of devotion: 'Tis a private conversation, if I may so speak, 'tis a secret commerce, 'tis seeing God face to face, and speaking to him as a Man speaks to his friend: All that can be conceived of the union of a man and his Wife, of a father and a Son, of a body and a member, is not yet strong enough to represent the union of a soul, that flies to heaven on the wings of faith and hope, and to which God discovers the inestimable treasures of his grace, God enters into her, and she into God, and they are but one whole. But who sees not that to smooth his way to so strict an union it is necessary he should be purified, even as he is pure? The light of heaven suffers no twilight, that is to say a mixture of day and night. God who is all light, cannot be united to a soul which should still be gloomy.

If there be any virtue to which we owe the spirit's presence in us, 'tis devotion. Now we know sufficiently what 'tis that can obtain this presence of the holy

holy spirit. 'Tis not the magnificence of the house, but the cleanness: When the wicked spirit is gone forth of the house, and at his return finds it swept and garnished, he is ashamed, and cannot enter in again, without the help of six more spirits, worser than the first. That which drives the wicked spirit away, draws thither the holy spirit, who never makes our heart his temple, but when all filthiness is banished thence. When *Moses* had hewn and polish'd the two tables, God then engrav'd his commandments on them. A painter cleans his cloth be sure before he draws his prince's picture. We have two fleshly tables of the heart, the understanding and the will; but we must not hope either that God will there write his Laws, or the holy Ghost draw out his image there, if they be not clean and polish'd. Devout and pious soul, that desirest to see God dwelling in thee, and his love within thy heart, cleanse the table of thy understanding, from so many errors, prejudices, vain imaginations, and evil thoughts; cleanse the table of thy will from

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from so many criminal inclinations and vicious habits. When both these tables are come to be without spot, God will undoubtedly come down himself there, and there grave his image.

Devotion is an entry into God's Closet. He brought me, says the spouse, to the banquetting-house. But no one enters there that hath not on the wedding-garment, that is not adorned with faith, and hope, and charity; if one is not clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, and bowels of mercy, the spirit of patience, of righteousness and of innocence. Devotion is the raising of a soul, and sin a weight; if we oppress this soul with the weight, how shall it raise it self; we must therefore discharge our hearts to day of one, and to morrow of another vice; one day we must destroy avarice, on another attack pride, the next day ambition; then will thy heart be more disengaged, and thy devotion more at liberty. But above all, we must remember that the heart is our most delicate and most tender part; nothing must be done to put it in disorder; it is easily put
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in disorder, and with the utmost difficulty brought to rights. 'Tis the eye of the soul; and a straw, or the least dust is sufficient to destroy it. 'Tis as milk that is turn'd and corrupted by the motion of the air; 'tis as a lute that is put out of tune even by the intemperature of the weather. Sanctification hath surely more parts than a lute has strings; and this holiness of heart is ruined by any one part being disorder'd, as one false sound spoils all the harmony of the consort; and therefore we must with wonderful care be watchful in protecting this heart. The soul is like a sea, and its passions are like winds; if we keep not in these passions they will raise up terrible storms in this Sea, and in the midst of these tempests, devotion which is a gentle virtue will scarce be heard; each passion will transport the heart along with it, and devotion a stranger and alone, will never recover it.

There is most certainly a very near alliance between words and actions; they

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come from the same source, and the same heart produces them. Therefore I think one cannot better dispose the mouth to sing the praises of his God, the mind to contemplate on his wondrous works, and the soul to elevate and raise it self, than by the practice of good works. We have before said, that a man is ill dispos'd for works of devotion, that is just come from a ball or comedy. I say now, on the other hand, that when a man is come from the house of mourning, where he hath comforted the afflicted, succour'd the miserable, supported the weak, fed the needy, and rescued the oppressed; he finds himself in such a gaiety and disposition for prayer, as is not to be conceiv'd. He comes to God with the joy of a servant who presents himself to his master after having done his duty, to obtain the reward. For tho' he acknowledges he can merit nothing from God, yet he knows that God liberally rewardeth in us, what we only do by the assistance of his grace. He approaches the altar with the assurance of a subject who appears before
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his prince with presents, which he is sure will make him way to his favour. For though our best works are but very imperfect gifts, and have even all that is good in them from his liberality, yet he knows that God accepts them as though they were of great price. I will not then make any difficulty to say, that both the antients and the moderns who have distinguish'd the active life of a christian from the contemplative life, and have believ'd that this might surpass that, and that the contemplative life was even more excellent than the other, are assuredly greatly mistaken. For in separating the active life, which consists in doing good to one's neighbour, and practising charity towards the miserable and needy, from the contemplative life to which they believe they might wholly give themselves up, they have undoubtedly deprived their devotion of a great help. I have already confessed that the employments of *Martba*, which respect the bodily service of our Lord Jesus Christ himself and of his members, deprives us of that time that is devoted to the work

of *Mary*, and prayer for all: What is but after *Mary* not counsel perfect desire of the work afflicted in the school practice of passion is without souls, the best way ideas of the suitable without soul: emphal for your self combat, the like, the images of benefits; and the door to labour with others. But languishes,

of *Mary*, that is, to meditation, reading and prayer. But we have time enough for all: When *Mary* hath heard enough, it is but fit that she should take her after *Martha's* place. Therefore I would not counsel him, who would attain to perfect devotion, to renounce that part of the world that is made up of the afflicted members of our Lord. 'Tis the school of virtue and piety; and the practice of works of mercy and compassion is so far from distracting devout souls, that 'tis the shortest and the surest way to arrive at devotion. The pleasures of the world, I own, are incompatible with those that should fill a devout soul: A tragical adventure, a triumphal shew, the hopes of a fortune for your self, the grandure of another's, combat, a war, all these, I say, and the like, have no alliance with the sweet images of God, of his love, and of his benefits; and therefore it is good to shut the door to these ideas, if you would labour with success in the establishing of others. But the thinking on one that languishes, or suffers for God's sake, is

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easily reconciled with the image of our Saviour suffering for us. A multitude of poor, on whom thou openest thy bowels, will quickly lead thee to the consideration of the bounteous liberality that thou receivest from God. The help that thou lendest one to defend his life, and another to defend his honour, will oblige thee to remember the benefits and succours thou receivest continually from heaven. Thou wilt have no need to banish such thoughts that accompany the active life, to place in their stead those that arise from contemplation; they will unite in the same heart, and lend each other mutual aids.

MEDITATION.

I have been often told, that the virtues are sisters that all go hand in hand; that they are so many links of a blessed chain, that is broken as soon as one of them is destroy'd. They cannot subsist but together; and therefore, my soul, thou canst not be truly devout, because thou art not truly virtuous, and hast not at heart

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practice of good works. Dost thou not see the world is made expressly on purpose to furnish matter for the exercise of all thy virtues, and to solícite thee to good and holy actions. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, That thou might'st join thy voice with those praises that all nature sings, and that thou should'st shew forth thy acknowledgements. The air forms storms and tempests, thunders, and lightnings, to create in thee the fear of God, and make thee tremble under his hand, who makes the mountains shake. Dost thou not see, that God makes some men miserable in this world, that they may be the objects of thy pity; poor, that thou may'st be liberal; afflicted, that thou may'st comfort them; weak, that thou may'st strengthen them; and sick, that thou may'st visit them? Does he not even suffer men to sin, and wander from the way, that thou may'st set them right again; ignorant, that thou may'st instruct them; imprudent, that thou may'st advise; some to fall, that thou may'st raise them up again, and look to thy own steps; and

even some wretched ones that perish, that thou may'st be possessed with a saving fear? Does he not suffer examples of vanity, that thou may'st despise the world? sudden, unexpected deaths, that thou may'st watch and be upon thy guard; proud men fallen to ruin, that thou may'st be humble; the wicked to be punished, that thou may'st abhor vice; and good men rewarded, that thou may'st seek and follow after virtue? Amidst so many lessons thou art deaf and unconcern'd; thou makest thy virtue, O my soul, consist in doing no ill, that is, in doing nothing; as if one should make life consist in death, and a privation of motion. Thou callest not to mind that the barren fig-tree is cut off from the root; that God will cast out the unprofitable servant; and that he will banish out of his paradise both the servant that shall have lost his talent, and him that only wrapp'd it up in a napkin.

P R A Y E R.

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may no longer be a rock and barren field; soften this rock by the showers of thy grace; bless this field, and make it fertile in the fruits of life. Let my hands distil down myrrh, and my fingers precious spices; let them be always open to the poor; let my feet run to succour the distress'd; my ears receive with greediness thy word and praises; my tongue continually celebrate thy glorious name, and carry my thanks unto the clouds. O holy spirit, principle of all good motions, breath life into me, be the soul of my soul, that it may be no longer buried in the tomb of vice and sleep, but act most powerfully, and that it may be enkindled with the fire of charity; that this fire may not leave it a moment in peace and without action, so that by the continual practice of good works, I may be dispos'd to devotion, and to a union with thee, who art the object of my love; that by this purity I may more and more invite him who is the author and giver of every good gift, to come and make me partaker of the flames of zeal and true devotion.

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

The Third general Advice, for the help of Devotion; to guard the Senses, and keep the Soul as it were lock'd up.

THERE is so great a commerce betwixt the heart and senses, that it will be in vain to endeavour to guard the one, if the others are not guarded. The heart is the house, the senses are the gates and windows: 'Tis by them the devil enters and seizes on our souls. This enemy plants as many batteries without as we have outward senses, and if we escape death on one side he kills us from another. But this we must say in behalf of the senses, they are rather miserable than criminal. They act as they are made to act, or rather suffer according to the laws of the creator; and even most of the ideas that come to them are innocent; they are only spoiled by coming to the heart. The beauty of a woman, the lustre of gold and jewels, the sweetness of mu-

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sick, are the works of God, and consequently good, but the heart corrupts these innocent images. However, as the heart empoisons only such objects as are presented to it, if we remove these objects, we shall remove from it the cause of its crimes; and its ill habits would undoubtedly be destroy'd if they wanted employ. And therefore 'tis of absolute necessity, to keep a watchful guard over the senses. *I made a covenant with mine eyes,* said holy *Job*, *why then should I think upon a maid.* It hath always been the practice of such as would be truly devout, to keep their souls secluded from the multitude of objects that surround them on all hands. 'Tis true, this maxim has been carried to superstition. Some have betaken themselves to the desarts, that they might see nothing: Others have lock'd themselves up in cells, never to go out; and history tells us of a Recluse in *Ægypt*, that would never give his own sister the satisfaction of seeing him; at last he receiv'd order from his superior, at the prayer of *St. Athanasius*, to go and

and visit her: Thither he came, and with his eyes shut presented himself before her, and would never see her, but said, satisfy thy self quickly with the sight of me, and so departed. These excesses do more injury to reason, than they afford help to devotion. The soul draws great advantages from the senses, when it makes a right use of them. To shut up all avenues by which understanding and knowledge pass into the soul, is to keep it in a dark prison, and bring it up in ignorance. The truth is this, 'tis dangerous to let it out on evil objects, because it receives thence a taint which makes it but ill dispos'd for devotion; and 'tis no less dangerous to let it out too much on indifferent objects, because this dissipates its strength, and it always brings back with it an air of vanity from these excursions.

This is the way of the world's living; we are visited, and make returns, we are exposed to conversation, that is to say, to the contagion of every corner. The eyes are always open to let in new objects, the ears to hear news; our con-

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versations are vain, we say a thousand impertinencies, more bad than good things: One entertains you with a discourse on dress; another with some trifling intrigue of his neighbourhood; a third fills you with slanders; another carries you to see a fine house, and a new building: A Traveller come from far will tell you wonders, and will enlarge his story with lies and miracles of his own making; and your soul returns home charg'd with trifles; and when she would enter into her closet, it is certain that she would not find the heart in its ordinary disposition. For this reason 'tis more difficult to be truly devout in great cities, where you can scarce keep your self from such amusements. I advise therefore the faithful soul to keep it self reserv'd: The souls of worldlings are like frequented streets, they are open to every comer, none is never there but in a crowd; and devotion that loves to be in private, is not pleas'd in these publick places. They are common inns where strangers are well lodg'd, and the master forc'd to

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lie out. But the heart of the faithful should be to himself, and God who is its master should be there always at large. *A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,* says Jesus Christ to his spouse, that is, to every christian soul. Shut this garden, if thou would'st preserve the flowers and fruits, and suffer not the purity of thy springs to be defiled by impure beasts. Temples and places of devotion should not be accessible to the profane. Our hearts are the temples of the holy Ghost; let us shut the gates then, to a thousand foolish ideas, and to an hundred vain objects that would profane them. The soul is a vessel which grace fills with sweet odours; but we must not give it too much air, for they will all evaporate, and leave it senseless and insipid. When a vessel is full, it can receive nothing, without losing part of what it had before. If it be full of devotion, and we carry it into the world, as it fills it self with vanities, these vanities will force out what it had that was good. This is a truth which we should

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often think on, that every time we make an excursion into the world, we there lose something we had: *Dinah* would needs go out and see the daughters of the country, but there she lost her loveliest ornament, her honour and virginity: But let us especially remember that in seeking after innocent objects, we often find criminal ones; the devil lies in ambush every where, he hath spread his nets among the flowers: Sin reigns in every place, so that let us go astray never so little, we undoubtedly meet with it, and 'tis very much, if it is not always to our cost.

But what shall we say of those, who go with settled purpose to places where they know sin reigns, and Satan triumphs? After having lost half their day in preparing for the play, they give the devil the other half, and plunge themselves in criminal pleasures: These people are wilful murderers, and God will most justly exact an account of their souls. I conclude from all this, that the devout person should be very serv'd with regard to the world, should

make and receive but few visits, and break himself of the vain curiosity of knowing what passes. 'Tis enough for him to know what passes in his own heart, and to regulate well its motions. What signifies it to him to know what becomes of such a fleet, what was the event of such a battle, how such a negotiation succeeded, how treaties of peace, or preparations for war go on. The knowledge of all this cannot make him happier. They will be only thoughts which will stick in his memory, and will from thence make an inroad upon his heart in the midst of his devotions.

MEDITATION.

How happy wilt thou be, my soul, when thou shalt be in that place, where thou shalt have nothing to fear; where thou may'st take thy flight, walk out, and wander where thou wilt, fly over an infinity of objects, and give thyself intirely up to contemplation, and the diversity of thy thoughts! This happiness thou wilt enjoy when thou shalt be in heaven. The

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every object will speak to thee of thy duty, and will move thee to thy obedience. Thou wilt no longer fear there should be snakes under the flowers, nor that the devil should lie in ambush in the places whither thy mind or steps shall carry thee. Thy enlarged soul shall no longer fear being dissipated, it shall embrace all objects, without the fear of being overwhelm'd by them. And thou shalt be filled with numberless and very different ideas, yet thy God shall have no smaller part in thee, for all those ideas shall be holy and friends of God. At present it is not so; thou canst not take one step, without incurring danger; thou canst not stir from home, nor from thy self, but thou must meet an enemy, that seeks and desires thy ruin: Thou canst not admit into thy breast these numerous objects that croud in at thy senses, but thou must fill thy heart therewith, and deprive thy God of the room that he alone should take up. Make not therefore so many sallies into the world, for thou wilt ever lose something by it. Include thy self within the compass of thine own heart; if it is not large 'tis deep, and thou wilt

there find exercise enough. Thou wilt never be able to sound it; it cannot be known but by him that tries the thoughts and reins. But dive into this subject as deep as thou canst. Examine thou thy self; and this knowledge of that which passes within thee, will be of more use to thee, than the knowledge of all that passes in the world. Concern not thy self in the wars and quarrels of publick or private persons. Take cognizance of those contests which are between thy flesh and thy spirit, betwixt the law of thy members and that of thy understanding. Appease those differences. Teach thy flesh to be in subjection. Replace reason on its throne, and give it piety for its counsellor; tame thy passions, and bring them under bondage. Put thy little state in good order, govern wisely and holily those numerous people which are contained in so little a kingdom; that is to say, that multitude of affections, thoughts, opinions, and passions which are in thy heart.

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P R A Y E R.

O thou, my God, director of the universe, who not only holdest the waters of the sea from overflowing of the earth, but restrainest also the malice of wicked men from overflowing the world ; thou, who by thy profound wisdom rulest all things, so that thou drawest light from out of darkness, preside thou over the motions of my heart, draw out light from this darkness and confusion. Take thou the reins of my soul, suffer it not to wander abroad, and to destroy it self in its wanderings. Stop the fury of its passions, and the rapidity of its motions ; that recollected within it self, and minding its proper business, it may think of preparing thee a lodging to retain thee to it self, to possess the solely ; to contemplate on thee only, to banish every other idea, and that by these means it may be disposed for the exercises of devotion.

CHAP.

C H A P. IV.

The fourth General Advice for the help of Devotion; to persevere in holy Exercises, and not to be discouraged by any difficulties.

WE have not represented devotion as a thing to be obtain'd with ease; therefore a good soul should not be surpriz'd when it meets with difficulties; much less should it be discouraged and lose heart: Every good soul has had experience, that in trying to raise it self to God, it hath found the wings of its devotion incumber'd either by the vanities of the world, or by the sluggishness of the flesh: In this estate, if it gives way 'tis lost. To these desires it is apparently necessary that the soul should add action and courage: *Solomon*, in his *Proverbs*, speaks of the motions of the sluggard, whose whole strength is spent in desires; he constantly makes the finest resolutions in the world, but never stirs from his place.

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place. It may well be with regard to the sluggishness of the soul that *Solomon* speaks so much, for there is hardly a chapter in which he has not some stroke at it: This sluggishness of the soul is the vice of those who exhaust themselves in praising virtue, so that they have no strength left to pursue and attain to it. The hypocrite acts in like manner. He praises, he desires, but he falls under the first temptation that his devotion meets. But dost thou not know, that all great things are difficult? Does a Pilot forsake his vessel, at the first gust of wind? A rower that makes against the stream, does he not set himself with resolution against the strength of the current? He still makes on, takes courage, and at last surmounts the difficulty. A tradesman leaves not off his calling for one loss, nor a courtier his hopes, for one shrewd turn of fortune; but each tries to regain by his diligence, what his misfortune may have depriv'd him of: And so should we set ourselves strongly against indevotion; and when we find our hearts ill-dispos'd, our

our motions languishing, our devotions distracted, we must do violence to ourselves, and check our hearts, till we have brought them back to their duty. We must pray, read, and meditate in spite of every thing. *Although, says St. Basil, The devil fill your heart with evil thoughts yet you must not for that leave the exercise of prayer; you must make new and greater efforts; you must pray to God that it would please him to break down that thick wall of vain thoughts which holds us separated from him, we must desire that our souls may soon ascend to him without being hindered by meeting with these vain and wicked objects: And though the enemy should come again with a reinforcement of new distractions, yet we must not either yield, or lose courage, nor despair of victory in the midst of the fight. We must persevere, till God, seeing our constancy, shall come, and fill us with the light of his spirit, put to flight the enemy, purify our understandings, and furnish our reason with a divine light, by which our soul, in possession of a tranquility free from all tempests, may serve God with a perfect*

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perfect joy. The Saint insinuates a reason, which may well support us in our resolutions of perseverance; namely, that the devil never leaves to tempt us, neither must we leave off resisting him; as our resistance discourages not him, so neither should his temptation discourage us. God, who is spectator of our combats, and rewarder of our labours, beholds with pleasure a faithful soul fighting with his infirmities and distractions; and seeing him ready to yield he will at length come and lend him an helpful hand.

Perseverance is a virtue of great use; it is to that we owe the fairest works of nature, art, and grace. If God had left the world imperfect, instead of a wonder he had made a prodigy. There are some certain works to which the last hand is so essential, that if they be not perfected, that which was begun is utterly lost. If you draw but the first lines of a picture, they will last on the cloth; but if you bring a wheel to the middle of the ascent of a hill, and let it go, in a moment it will reach the bottom

tom of the vale ; your labour will not only be imperfect, but come to nothing. Devotion is of this last sort of thing ; leave it half done, and that which you have done will soon be lost. 'Tis *Penelope's* webb ; the night undoes the labour of the day. If thy life is not one perpetual day, and thou labourest not incessantly to advance in piety by constant practice, one single night, formed up of the darkness of indevotion, and the absence of grace, will ruin a work of many years ; and a moment's relaxation and idleness will destroy whatever a courage long supported shall have produced : But there is nothing which perseverance cannot accomplish. Thy devotion, christian soul, is but a spark. Choicely nourish this holy flame ; blow it incessantly ; heap around it combustible matter ; make thy self a treasure of good things ; turn thy self often towards Jesus Christ, thy sun and thy star, and this small spark will become a great fire ; this fire will cause great burnings ; these burnings will throw out flames ; and these flames will carry thee to

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heaven : But if thou neglectest this spark, it will go out. *Sampson* gave himself into the hands of *Dalila*, he slept on her knees, she cuts off his hair in which his strength lay, and when he awakens, he would, according to his custom, bear away the gates of *Gath*, and break the bonds of the *Philistines* ; but he finds himself no longer the same person. Thus the good man who relaxes from his daily devotion, sleeps in the arms of pleasure, his soul is enervated ; he thinks to return, according to his wont, to his commerce with God ; but the devil sets upon him, and overpowers him with a multitude of evil thoughts, under which his devotion lies bound, as it were with so many chains.

Should the heavens stand still but one day, it may be, there would be an universal overthrow of all nature ; at least all things below must undoubtedly suffer considerable damage. When the superior faculties of the soul stop their divine motions, one cannot question but there will thence arise great disorders in the inferior part. For the passions im-
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improve these hours of relaxation, to prepare themselves for a revolt. Its necessary therefore that our piety and devotion should have the constancy, the quickness and the regularity of the motions of the heavens, that this little world may always be in good order. Nothing should hinder, nothing interrupt the course of our devotion. Consider *Daniel*, whom all the terrors of death could not stop in his divine course of praying at his seasons: He must be thrown into the lions-den, if he but call on God; but this does not hinder him from prostrating himself at his hours towards *Jerusalem*. But especially, let us estrange our selves from the manner of those who pursue the affairs of this world as the most urgent. Let us give to God in the first place that which belongs unto him, and let us be under no concern for the rest. They say, the serpent secures his head, when he is pursued, and exposes his body when he cannot preserve it. The hours devoted to the exercise of piety, are the head of our life, and 'tis a holy prudence not to expose

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expose them, but cover them from danger, for fear the devil and the world should devour them.

In fine, I say, that perseverance in devotion is better than its violent excess. 'Tis better to march by short steps, but constantly, than to make swift courses, but interrupted ones. There are some that have fits of devotion, for a day there is nothing so ardent, so humble, nor so warmly affected: But to morrow the torrent of their tears is so thoroughly drained that you can hardly perceive any tokens of it. The burning of this fever is so abated, that one cannot find the least heat. A constant mediocrity is to be prefer'd before these excesses of such short continuance. Not that I think, devotion should not have its seasons, and raise it self extraordinarily upon some certain days and occasions. These are the exceedings of devotion, to which we should aspire as oft as we well can; and especially not be wanting therein on times appropriated to holy works, such as participating of the holy sacrament of Christ's body and blood.

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But I would have the soul, besides these extraordinaries, have its ordinary course of piety well govern'd. And if it cannot always have its extraordinary motions as were to be desir'd, yet, at least, let it never fall into any shameful relaxation and disorders.

M E D I T A T I O N.

I should have but too much reason, O my God, to be discouraged, and despair of success in all my designs, if I considered only the greatness of the enterprize, the difficulties that occur, and the meanness of my forces, or, to say better, my weakness and my nothingness. I desire great things for I desire to be one with God. I would become like him ; I would renew his image in me ; I would cleanse my heart, which sin hath sullied and defiled ; I would raise that great edifice, which sin and the devil have thrown down ; I would ascend thy throne ; I would be a king and priest to God my father. But, O my soul, where dost thou find strength enough in thee, for these great things, thou who art darkness and weakness

weakness, and impurity it self? Altho' thou hadst no other enemy but the devil, how could'st thou vanquish that red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns? that cursed serpent, from the beginning of the world, empoisoned with his breath and words our first parents; he at this day infects the springs and sources where we go to drink; he lays his snares in all our ways, and nets in all our paths; but above all, he never makes greater attempts to ruin us, than when we make any to unite our selves to God by prayer and by devotion. Then he stirs up the fancies of our imagination, to take us from the presence of our God. He lifts up the floods of our passions, and our concupiscence, to draw us from the safe port. 'Tis true, he has great interest in acting thus. For, O my soul, thou never fightest with such advantage and success, as by prayer, when it is fervent and devout. Therefore he stirs up heaven and earth to distract thee, and inspire thee with sentiments of indifference: Flatter not thy self, my heart, if thou seest not this enemy, with the eyes of thy flesh, dart out his javelins

at thee; he is speaking, attacking, and tempting thee by the mouth of thy concupiscence, that never fails him, and hath made a league with him: But lose not courage, my soul; if thou canst do nothing of thyself, thou canst do all things through thy saviour who strengthens thee. Watch be sober, persevere, hold fast, cast out the wicked spirit, and chase him far from thee; resist the devil, and he will flee from you, he presses upon none but such as give way.

P R A Y E R.

And thou, Lord Jesus, my divine redeemer, great angel of the covenant and angel of light, oppose thy self, in my behalf, against this angel of darkness. Thou lion of the tribe of Judah, break the jaw-bones of this roaring lion that goes about to devour me: Thou blessed seed of the woman, break the serpent's head; give me a remedy against its poyson. Let thy grace heal the wounds his bitings have made upon my soul: Support me in the difficulties that

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this dreadful foe hath thrown in the way of my devotion. When I enter into my closet, or thy church, be to me as a wall of brass and a wall of fire, to defend me from the approaches of these wicked spirits. So that under the wings of thy protection, and of thy love, I may pass away these few moments in a tranquil and serene air, in security and peace, by the favour of which I may consecrate to thee all my thoughts, my will, my understanding and imaginations, and that nothing may withdraw me from thy bosom.

CHAP. V.

The fifth General Advice for the help of Devotion: To have God always before one's Eyes.

THIS is a remedy against many evils, but in a more particular manner against indevotion. I shall shortly shew, that the faithful soul should have its hours of meditation, wherein

to reflect on the nature of the supreme being, and awaken the remembrance of his benefits and graces; but this is not what I would at present say. I speak now of that continual, and as it were habitual thought of God, that never should forsake and leave us. 'Tis a most spiritual and delicate meditation that comes across, and steals some moments from the business of the world to consecrate them to God's service. 'Tis a sublime operation of the understanding, enlightned with the lights of grace, that finds out God in every thing interests him in all our actions, and singles him out from every other object. 'Tis an action of the soul, by which, in the midst of human affairs it turns it self habitually without any violence towards God. It causes every thing to be a step of ascension to heaven and every object to entertain him with his God. An artisan in the midst of his works, a mariner in the midst of his voyage, a scholar in his readings, will find means to sanctify what he is about by causing the divinity to interpose be-
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his pious reflexions. Faithful soul, let the lamb follow thee wherever thou goest, that thou one day may'st follow him wherever he shall go; if thou lay'st thee on thy bed, think on the sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, who for thy sake enter'd the chambers of death. Art thou composing thy self to sleep, think of Jesus Christ, whose blessed eyes the sleep of death, for thy salvation, closed. A new-born infant will bring to thy mind the humility of thy Lord in his birth. A wretch that suffers for his sins, will make thee think on Jesus Christ, who suffered on the cross for thine. A man who asks thy charity, tells thee, our Lord was made poor, that thou mightest be made rich. In a word, from every thing thou may'st readily find an occasion to think on thy God. What shall I say of natural objects, which will bring their great author into thy mind, almost against thy will? If thou risest in the morning, thou canst not see the rising sun, without reflecting on the great creator of that chief masterpiece, and without remembering the
sun

fun of thy soul, who darts the beams of grace into thy heart, to disperse its darkness. The trees, the rivers, the mountains, the corn-fields, the fruits, the flowers, and every thing, will remind thee of God. *For the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.* The very flies and worms speak thee, O God, since we in them see thy divinity shine forth. *For this workman, St. Austin hath well said, appears great in great things, but in such a manner that he appears no less great, even in the least of all his works.*

We should then make it habitual to our selves to think on God, even whilst we are about different matters; and this will be the true way to do that well, which we shall undertake, and to engage God to operate with us. But there are several employs engross not a man's mind. A labourer at his work; or a woman in the ordinary affairs of her sex, will revolve in their mind a thousand chimerical notions, will wander in a thousand places; and think on an hundred things successively: And what should

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should hinder them from giving to God this part of their souls, and the attention they steal from the business they have in hand? Why should they not think on their redeemer, on the obligations they lie under to him, and the acknowledgements they ought to have of them, rather than on some idle conversation they have had, or some trifling adventure, whose relation makes them merry? *We must, saith St. Basil, diligently guard our heart, and never suffer it to start from meditating upon God, for fear the memory of his marvelous deeds should be lost or stifled in the croud of vain thoughts. We must so behave, that by a perpetual remembrance, the thought of the divinity may make an indelible impression on us.* This is not so impossible as may well be imagin'd at first; for a truly devout soul not only thinks on God without any trouble, but very often, without perceiving what it was that introduc'd those thoughts. *Thy praises, said David, shall be continually in my mouth.* Upon which the author above cited says, *How can this be?*

be? Can a man, amidst the affairs and conversations of the world, have God's praises always in his mouth? when he sleeps, when he drinks, when he eats, and even when he holds his tongue, can he sing the praises of God? I answer, saith he, there is within a man an intelligible mouth by which he receives the word of life which is the heavenly bread; nothing hinders but he may have God's praises always in the mouth; and I say, that the thoughts of God, engraved and as it were sealed in the superiour part of the soul, may be called praises that never quit the heart.

Finally, one cannot well say, how great a help this is to devotion. When we must seek for God a great way off the soul strays by the way; but if she hath him always near her, she cannot fail of finding him. How easy is it to set the heart in the traces of devotion and the ways of our Lord, when she never loses sight of him! If you let your furnace grow quite cold, 'twill put you to great pains and great charge to heat it anew; but keep the fire a little in, and a little addition will bring

to its necessary heat. So if our soul grows remiss, and interrupts its meditation on God, 'twill cost us a great deal of trouble to kindle again the flames of our devotion; wherefore we must always keep the soul in exercise.

This continual thinking on the divinity, will be a most acceptable and pleasing sacrifice to God; like the sacrifice of the morning and the evening, which was also called the continual sacrifice; like that holy fire that burnt continually upon the altars; in short, like an invocation without ceasing: For, *may'st thou pray incessantly, saith St. Basil, not by pronouncing words of invocation, but in doing works of imitation: If thy conduct tend only to unite and make thee like to God, thy life will be as one perpetual and constant prayer.* Let us not doubt, but that these continual sacrifices, that this incense which smoaks perpetually, and that these implicit and indirect prayers, which ascend from our hearts in all places, and at all times, will become most efficacious means to procure us an easy access to God. So

that as often as we would unite our selves yet more straitly to him by devotion and more express prayers, he will incessantly be found near us, and filling us with his light, he will carry us with him, and honour us with the blessed communications of his spirit

MEDITATION.

Man is a strange compound; he takes abundance of pains not to do his duty, and neglects the easiest things, because God commands them. There is nothing easier than to think on God, there is yet nothing that is less done than this. It seems almost impossible not to think on him, since every object of our senses speaks his divinity. Seest thou not my soul, his lines, his traces, and his characters in every thing and place? But dost thou not see them in thy own conscience, are they not in the breast of every one of us? 'Tis easy then to think on our God; but there is more pleasure than ease in it. Ah, my soul, art thou wert as spiritual and as free from the corrupted matter as thou should'st be, thou

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would'st take the greatest pleasure and delight imaginable in such meditation. This great God, this good God, is as well the most exquisite beauty, as the only good. My eyes admire the light of the sun, the regularity of its motions, the efficacy of its heat, and the just and ordinary revolutions of heavenly bodies; we admire human beauties, and those genius's whose strength and elevation seem to us angelical. But thou should'st know, my soul, that these beauties flow from thy God, and are but feeble images of his adorable majesty; that the light of the sun is but as darkness to him, and the most excellent and most elevated souls are earthly and creeping, compared to his incomprehensible understanding. If thou hadst seen him in his glory, thou hadst been ravished with extasies; thou would'st have said, It is good for me to be here; let me here make a tabernacle: But alas, thou canst not see him; he is nothing of all thou seest, and all thou seelest; he is no bodily light, nor colour for thine eyes; he is no voice nor sound for thine ears; he is no savour for thy palate, nor scent for thy smelling,

nor any solid body for thy touch. Thou
seest no part of him, and yet may'st find
him every where. Think on him, and
thy meditation will make thee feel, and
hold, and possess him: Thou wilt see with
thy spiritual eyes, an intelligible light that
effaces all the beauty of the visible one;
thou wilt hear a heavenly harmony, that
surpasses all the charms of musick; thou
wilt taste of food, whose delicacy and ex-
cellence will be beyond imagination; and
thou wilt cry, O taste and see how
good and gracious the Lord is! Thy
heart is never so well at ease, as when
'tis near its treasure. Know then, my
soul, God is thy treasure and true riches;
and therefore follow him continually, see
him always, and when thou hast him, never
forsake him. Should a woman take de-
light to think of any thing with so much
joy, as on her absent husband? But God
is thy spouse, my soul; thy husband is
that hath made thee, he married thee
with his great compassion. Should'st thou
therefore long to possess him, and seek for
his divine and chaste embraces? No,
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fixing thy mind to his divine essence and infinite perfections by continual meditation. Get then behind, ye vain and wretched things, who rob me of the object of my love. Far hence ye criminal affairs, who hinder me from thinking on my God.

P R A Y E R.

I seek after thee, O my God ; do thou condescend to seek after me, that we may immediately meet each other. Draw near to me ; lay thine hand under mine head, for I am sick of love. Thou puttest a veil over thy face, and robbest me of the greatest part of the rays of thy glory : 'Tis because my eyes are yet unclean, and cannot look upon thee ; they are weak, they cannot bear the lustre and brightness of thy light. Thou art hidden behind thy creatures, and wilt be seen only by glances : But, O my God, purify mine eyes, that they may behold thee openly ; set my heart in thy ways, that it may seek thee : Kindle my affections, that they may embrace thee. If thou art hidden, if thou

art frequently estrang'd from me; I, on the other hand am the lost sheep, and I forsake thee. Take then an opportunity to seek me, shew thy self unto me; alienate thy self no longer, and hide thy face no longer from me. Recall me from my wanderings: Suffer me not be hurried away by the world, and by the croud of vain objects. Fix my soul to thee by the bonds of thy love, so that I may not be a moment without thinking on thee; and that when I desire to address to thee in prayer, I may always find thee near me.

C H A P. VI.

The first particular Advice; To have our hours of Devotion well regulated, and well chosen.

AFTER these general counsels, it may not be unprofitable to lay down some particular ones: And first, I believe it may be a great help to devotion to have its hours very regular.

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Man is a creature who acts by custom, much as other creatures do. A horse, that has got a custom of going in such a certain road, will never fail of returning by the same; when his times of feeding are come, he would not willingly go any farther. So the heart returns of it self, without any guidance or constraint, to the things it hath customarily done. Take then your hours, at evening, morning, and mid-day. Make to your self a law for some time, never to let those hours pass, or dedicate them to any thing but devotion; and your heart will return to it at those hours without any trouble. Even the parts we have that are destitute of understanding are capable of these habits. When the stomach has gotten a custom of eating at such a certain hour, if that is not done, it is very sensible that it wants something. The conscience is the stomach of the soul, give it its meals at settled times, and when you fail to do so, it will give you notice. But learn to do no violence to it, nor solicit it to hold its peace. When once
it

it warns you, amidst your affairs, that its time is come, put it not off to another hour; for if you put it out of order, it will destroy itself. It will warn you no more, you will be oblig'd to solicit it; and a soul is then in a sad state, when the conscience is asleep, when the heart grows drowsy, and when one hath need to awaken it by some express reflexion.

If you ask me what hours you must chuse, and how many, I shall find some difficulty perhaps to answer; *David* set out seven for himself. *Seven times a day do I praise thee.* *Daniel* had three principal ones: Our Lord Jesus Christ withdrew himself for whole nights in the mountain to pray: How were it to be wished, that we could give God all our time! But the necessities of nature, and the infirmities of the flesh, hinder that: And I cannot tell of what those devout men are made, who, we have been told, spent whole days and nights in meditation and contemplation. I will not pronounce any thing on that head, I leave every one to his conscience. If

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we cannot give God all, it is certain at least, we must give him the better part; and we must destine some of our hours peculiarly to him, which are never to be given to the world. The number of them should be regulated according to our different strengths; and I think they should be encreased, in proportion to the progress we make in devotion. A child cannot lift a burthen, which a strong man can carry very easily. Let every one then order himself according to his strength. 'Tis good to eat when one is hungry, and to approach to God when the heart is warm; let that happen never so often it should never be refused on that account. But observe, that when your appetite is gone yet you fail not to have your regular meals; you chuse rather to eat without hunger, than lose your life for want of nourishment. It is the same thing here; if you are miserable enough to lose this holy appetite of things spiritual, wait not its coming; lose not the hours of your devotion, and your spiritual repasts; eat tho' without stomach, and it may be your appetite

appetite will be quicken'd. Few men in perfect health eat less than twice a day, and even sick folks are made to take some nourishments much oftner, observing only that their meals be short and light. I think the same course would do well in the dieting indisposed souls, and such as are yet but novices in the exercise of devotion. We must oblige them to return to it often, but by short exercises, not to disgust those souls, which are yet but weak.

If a clock be not wound up very regularly, it will not go long; the weights which are fasten'd to its cords descend, and in the instant they reach the ground the whole machine ceases its motion: The soul is this wonderful machine, made up of faculties like wheels and springs, the weights of the flesh draw it down: Wind them up often, if you would have it go. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees:* They that look after these clock-work machines, take care to wind them up every day at certain hours, otherwise they will be out of order. And this I have

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All hours are good, for the heavens are always open, and God's throne always accessible: But yet there are some much properer than others. Those of the morning are so much and truly God's, that one cannot rob him of them without sacrilege. If God will have the firstlings of our flocks, much rather will he have our first hours; and what more proper time to lift our eyes and hearts up to the sun of righteousness, than that in which the sensible sun rises on our world? Is it not then time that the morning star should rise in our hearts, and that prayer should open the door of grace? At what hour can we more properly lift up our hearts to God, than at the beginning of a race, whose success depends entirely on him? In the morning we must seal up our hearts with these holy thoughts, and employ our minds on chaste and pure Ideas; that the corruption of the world, which in the rest of the day will come, and by the senses give a thousand assaults

faults upon the heart, may find it bravely fortified. This will be that sweet and heavenly dew of the morning, which falling upon our souls, will make them fruitful in good works the rest of the day. This will be an antidote against the infected air of the world, without which we should never stir out of doors, nor expose our selves to the meeting so many contagious objects. As God should be the first thing living in our hearts, so should he also be the last; *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending*, saith the Lord. Let him open the gate of our thoughts in the morning, and shut it up at night. This will be a seal which the devils will respect: Entirely disarm'd as we shall be whilst sleeping, they will tremble at our sight, and will not dare to accost us.

The destroying angel will, as he passes by, have respect to this impression, and this fruit of the blood of the lamb. These devotions of the evening will be holy seed sown in good ground, that will not fail to shoot up and appear in the morning; for the heart will find no trouble

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to begin the present day with that which ended the foregoing one. And since 'tis true, that the soul left to it self in sleep, is naturally carried to the matter which it was last employ'd about when waking; we cannot doubt of happy dreams, and that those images which shall arise from the last impressions which devotion left upon the heart, will be sweet and comfortable.

The night it self is perfectly a friend to devotion; then recollection is easy, the soul not being dissipated by the presence of objects. Nothing is sweeter than to fill our hearts with God, when they are void of all things else. God is well pleased that a faithful soul should make his bed his altar, and offer up his vows to him in that retirement far from all witnesses. *Let thy body be laid, so thy soul be exalted, and thou fallest down upon the knees of thy heart,* as says St. Clement the Roman, the companion and disciple of St. Paul. Methinks these nightly commerces with God should be more intimate, because, when we are laid in bed, we bid adieu to the world,
and

and banish our cares, to give the body its repose. The soul is then in good case, and when it wakes, finding it self freed from the incumbrance of the world, hath full liberty to ascend to God. Therefore we find that the greatest part of the *Psalms* were composed by *David*, in, or for, the night. *I will bless the Lord*, saith he in the 16th *Psal*m, *who hath given me counsel, my reins also instruct me in the night-season*. He assures us in the 6th *Psal*m, *That he watered his couch with his tears*; and the spouse says, *By night on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loveth*. And history tells us, That *St. Anthony* complained very often of the sun's return, and in such words as these; *O sun, why dost thou come to trouble the repose of my soul? Why dost thou rise so early, to part me from the bosom of my God? Why dost thou come to deprive me of the sight of my true sun.*

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MEDITATION.

The measure of the love of God, is to have neither bounds nor measure, it is to contain every degree of love. The true rule for hours of devotion, is to dedicate to God all our hours. 'Tis this, my soul, that thou should'st do, but thou canst not; for thou draggest after thee a corporeal prison that will not let thee. Thy affections cannot so far be subdued; thou art subject even to those worldly necessities that cannot suffer it: How happy then wilt thou be, when thou shalt be in a place, where thou may'st give all thy hours to thy creator, and to thy saviour. There, freed from the chains of the flesh, thou may'st serve in perfect freedom the father of spirits. Now thou dividest thy time betwixt thy employments, thy diversions, thy meals, and thy devotions: But then these four things shall no longer be distinct, they shall all be blended together. Thy continual employment shall be to sing the praises of thy God, and to contemplate on his glory, Thy meat and drink shall be to do the will of thy father, which is
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in heaven. Thy pleasures and diversions shall be to possess, by a most intimate enjoyment, God, who is the source of all joys. Thou shalt no longer have hours of devotion, for that fourth part shall be confounded in the other three: Thou shalt ever be all on fire and on flame in the service of thy God, and therein shall consist thy supreme happiness. Would'st thou then here below come near to the glories of paradise? Multiply and continue as much as thou canst thy commerce and communications with thy God. If thou wert always with him, he would always be with thee. Now where God is, there is paradise. When thou enterest thy closet with devout dispositions, God enters there with thee, and after him there enters a croud of angels, of cherubims and seraphims: For he encampeth his angels round about them that fear him, especially at the time they are serving him. There is no sight more agreeable to the angels who seek the salvation of man, than to see a person truly devout, who falls with his face to the earth, who baths his couch and his bosom with tears, who send up ardent sighs to heaven,

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heaven, who directs his eyes towards heaven where his heart is, and who stretches his unspotted hands to his God, in order to embrace him. There is joy in heaven over one devout soul, as over one repenting soul: And heaven does as it were descend, and come to this sight. Labour therefore, O my soul, to be continually in the exercise of devotion, as in that of repentance, that heaven may rejoice, and that thy God may come often to thee. By these frequent communications thou wilt become bright as Moses's face. The rays of this divine sun will penetrate and enlighten thee, they will disperse the clouds around thee, and melt that ice and that coldness which make thee negligent. By frequently contemplating on him, thou wilt become his mirror, and be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

P R A Y E R.

O sun of my soul, I seek thee with
all my might, hide not thy self from
me, nor suffer an eclipse; scatter those
D d clouds

clouds which cover thee, which keep thee separated from me, and rob me of the prospect of thy light. My sins, I acknowledge, raise continually thick, filthy, malignant vapours, that may form great clouds, and these clouds produce the storms and tempests of thy severe justice, if thou wouldst punish me as I deserve: But, O my God, hinder henceforth the rising of these vapours, and drain the source of them. Let my heart be no longer as a bog, full of standing and corrupt waters; but let it be a pure and living spring. Let it no longer be a cursed field abounding in poisonous herbs, but a field fertile of flowers and fruits of life; and that from thence may ascend to thee none but fragrant vapours, and benign exhalations of prayers and thanksgivings, that may send forth an odour of sweet favour and appeasement. Let these gentle vapours turn to sweet dews; and thy grace, falling on my soul, as rain upon a thirsty land, refresh it, and make it green and fruitful in the works of righteousness. Thou art my light, enlighten me in the darkness

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darkness of the night, when I invoke thee from my bed. Come and honour me with thy presence, whilst all other objects are away, that I may possess thee solely, and nothing may deprive my soul of thee. Grant, that the sweetness of this joy may diffuse in my eyes a heavenly sparkling, and an holy gaiety over my face, that may accompany me all the day, and secure me from the many troubles to which I am exposed: Let me lie down at night as in thy bosom, and throw my self into thine arms, secure from all those things that terrify in the darkness.

C H A P. VII.

The second particular Advice for the help of Devotion; Solitude, and holy Assembling together.

IT requires no great judgment to perceive that devotion requires solitude. We have our Lord's decision in the case, *When thou would'st pray*, says he,

he, *enter into thy closet*. They were strange prayers, those of the *pharisees*, in corners of the streets and publick places: Our Lord had reason good to accuse them of hypocrisy: But solitude is not only necessary to the avoiding pomp and ostentation, which God in all things hates, but especially in devotion; but also to the end that prayer may be pure and well made. By what means, I pray, should a soul collect it self within, if a thousand objects accost its senses and draw it out? We must therefore put our selves in a place of security, where we shall not be obliged to defend it against the assaults to which sensual objects expose it. Let us retire our selves never so far from the world, we shall carry enough of it along with us: And the ideas of its objects will sufficiently persecute us, without our voluntary exposing our selves to the persecution of the objects themselves. Yes, the commerce of a faithful soul with God, require a secret place. *God is a spouse, who bestows not his favours on the croud, nor exposes them to the sight of men*, saith St. Bernard.

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He requires the shade and retirement. Wherefore the bride saith, *I brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.* When we design any thing which requires application, we seek retirement, that we may not be diverted: We ought then to seek it for devotion, since nothing in the World requires more particular application. The sincerely devout should be at a distance from all witnesses to be entirely at their liberty. Devotion has its particular words and actions; it impresses on the soul its transports and motions, and the body may often intermix its own, and these should not be exposed to the sight of men, who may make wrong judgments thereof. If these reasons had any need of being supported with examples, we have that of our Lord Jesus, to whom the mountains seemed not private or retir'd enough, for he joyn'd thereto the darkness of the night; that of *Daniel*, who shut the door of his chamber to pray; that of *St. Peter*, who went up to the top of the house to offer his devotions; but this point is so much

much beyond dispute, that 'tis not necessary to add more.

The necessity of solitude for devotion may afford us larger prospects yet. There have been many great men, and I would believe many great saints, who have thought solitude and devotion to be so inseparable, that the truly devout should not only give themselves some few hours of retirement, but that their whole lives should be entirely dedicated thereto. 'Twas this opinion that peopled heretofore the wilderness of *Thebais* and *Syria*, with so many solitary hermits. They fled from the world to raise their souls more easily to God, and acquire a habit of devotion more pure and more ardent. And hence probably may come the very name of devotion, which is derived from devoted, because these people devoted themselves to God in a particular manner.

It is a hard matter to pronounce definitively upon this kind life: I would not condemn all that have followed it. I will not doubt but that many of them were led, like our saviour, by the spirit,
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into the desert. But I may safely say, this life is subject to as many temptations as that of the world. 'Tis, in my judgment, presuming very much upon one's own strength, to expose one's self alone to the assaults of so powerful an enemy as the devil. In society if one falls, another raises him up again; but in the desert each must support himself; depend on himself for every thing, be his own pastor, conductor and director; and he that thinks he has sufficient knowledge for all those duties, has too good an opinion of himself. I would say nothing stronger against this sort of life, than *St. Basil*, a mighty admirer himself of a monastick life hath said: He believes this kind of life is not more charitable than prudent; either one is in want of assistance, or in a condition of giving it; if one has need of receiving aid, 'tis certainly imprudence to confine your self to a place, where you can receive none; if you can give it others, 'tis want of charity, to deprive society of your assistance. He hath reason to say, that 'tis to deprive one's self of
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of the hopes of hearing, one day, from our Lord's mouth these words, *Thou hast fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, cloathed the naked, and visited the sick, and in prisons.* In a word, I am afraid this father's observation is too true, that such a life, far from being the way to humility, is a ladder of pride; for these men comparing themselves with themselves, as St. *Paul* speaks, and finding nothing more excellent than themselves, think they are perfect. Every man looks on himself too near, to know himself well; and we know not our selves well enough to mend our selves. Therefore a solitary that examines himself by no body's eyes but his own, lets scape undoubtedly a great many faults, which none but such partial judges as we are to our selves, would ever pardon. Nay, I have already said, this life may be so far from being useful to devotion, that I believe it may be prejudicial; because we deprive it of the assistance of the practice of works of mercy, which are requisite to it. A man in the desert has his distractions too, and unless

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his soul be of an extraordinary make, they may be, 'tis to be feared, more dangerous than those of the world. A mind left to it self, without any guide, often commits strange oversights. A great crowd and great solitude, are two very dangerous extreams; and an extraordinary share of grace is necessary to succeed in the one and the other case: And therefore, those that have receiv'd of God but ordinary gifts, should chuse a life betwixt these two extreams. But at least it is without dispute, that solitude is absolutely necessary at times set apart for devotion; which yet must not be taken in such a manner as may be to the prejudice of religious assemblies, or to the publick devotions. They are of use to devotion; and under pretence of our closet devotion we must never deprive our selves of so necessary an assistance to piety, as publick prayers are. 'Tis true, that every where besides, the senses are enemies to recollection; but here, both the senses and the imagination favour the disposition of a pious soul. The sight of Churches, which are God's Houses;

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the presence of the angels, who, we know, are assisting there; the society of a multitude of souls, who join their vows; the word of God which echoes in their ears; the prayers that unite themselves, and which being conceived by many hearts, compose but one address. All these things, I say, extremely help to exalt the soul, and are of great service in banishing the ideas of earthly things, and substituting in their stead holy ideas. 'Tis not impossible to preserve solitude, even in the midst of this croud. The truly religious soul in these places is so recollected in its self, that no outward objects can approach it. The faithful is in the closet of his heart; he leaves but one door open for the word of God, and for such things as may forward his devotion; but all are shut upon those objects of vanity, which are often seen in those holy places. *There is, saith St. Bernard, a spiritual as well as a corporal solitude; and he that is free from vain and idle thoughts is alone, though in the midst of a croud of people: But 'tis a terrible profanation to* carry

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carry to this temple indevout dispositions, to have the heart open to all sorts of vanities, to go to see and to be seen ; to hear in order to find fault, and catch at syllables and sentences. These men have a great account to give! It had been enough to have offended men, and God himself every day of the week, and not to come on the sabbath to bid him battle as it were in his own house. I will not enlarge here upon the manner of our behaviour in those places ; my design being only to lay down rules for the devotion of the closet.

MEDITATION.

Where shall I find an happy solitude, that may be a secure defence to me from the persecution of the enemies of my soul? If I go out of the world, I carry it with me : If I go into my closet, I am followed by a crowd of sensual thoughts, that cruelly persecute me. Should I save myself in the wilderness, and should I dwell in rocks with the owl and the cormorant, there should I meet with vultures, piercing

cares that would prey upon my bowels. I should there be set upon by a flock of birds, and a multitude of light and vain thoughts, that would transport me from my self, and plunge me in the world again. What shall I do to remedy this mighty mischief? Thou knowest, O my God, and I know not; O let it be thy will then to teach me! There is here no port, to cover me from these rough tempests, nor charms that can drive away these devils, and cast out these fancies of my imagination: I must therefore get a new heart; for 'tis not so much the world's fault, as my own. 'Tis not that it pursues me, but that I have fix'd it in my heart, and carry it along with me whithersoever I stir. If my heart were clean and pure, I might find solitude in the midst of cities and populous assemblies. My soul, collected in it self, would be encompassed on all sides with the contempt of the world, and with a rampart; the love of God and goodness would possess the avenues, they would keep a good guard, they would drive away every object that should come to in

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P R A Y E R.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, purify'd from those vain images of the world which sin and satan have engraved in my soul: And then, under the wings of thy good spirit and of thy love, I shall find in my self this solitude I seek for every where, but no where find. It must be thou, O my God, who must free me from my corruptions; let me do what I can I am still my self. O my God, why wilt thou not that thy grace, while we are in the flesh, should have sufficient efficacy to mortify the dispositions of the flesh? Why must I always have the Moabite and Amalekite by my side, whilst I am advancing towards the heavenly Canaan, and towards the Jerusalem above? Why have we here below only streams of thy grace, and why can I not have a river and a sea which may wash my inwards, and which may

cleanse them from these miserable impurities? Thou willest, O my God, my tempters should be always near me, and that the *Philistines* should be still upon me, that I may watch, and not sleep on the knees of *Delilah*. Thou willest, I should always have a thorn in my flesh, and an angel of satan to buffet me, that I may not be exalted out of measure: O my guardian, let no temptation touch me but what is common to men; give me, a happy issue out of all of them, and strength to sustain my self under their assaults: Thy grace is sufficient for me; 'tis true; then let it not fail me, let it perfect its work in the midst of my infirmities, let it drive away all vain thoughts, let it calm the agitations of my soul, let it direct me to a place of refuge, where, far from noise, passions and worldly affections, I may consecrate to thee my labours, my words and my thoughts, and where I may sing eternally thy praise, and celebrate thy majesty.

CHAP.

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C H A P. VIII.

*The Third particular Advice for the help
of Devotion; Meditation, and Read-
ing.*

TH E soul of man comes into this world at least as ill-inform'd of the affairs of grace, as of those of nature. It is in all respects a *Rasa tabula*, a meer blank, and hath need of instruction in every thing: It easily acquires the knowledge of what is necessary to the subsistence of its life; because those lights are furnish'd by the senses, and because these objects are of its reach; but it hath need of greater strength, to attain to that knowledge which concerns the spiritual life, because those objects are disproportion'd to its force; and yet this knowledge is absolutely necessary to the practice of virtue, and especially the practice of devotion. This last virtue is made up of love and zeal; but our love is proportion'd always to our knowledge. I know not therefore of what

what nature those ignorant devotions are which are destitute of all light, and are directed only by the senses. They are, it may be, the weaknesses of the constitution, rather than the effects of grace: These devotions of the ignorant are generally superstitious and gross; they fix themselves commonly on sensible objects; whereas in true religion, all is intelligible and divine. The objects of their veneration is commonly an *Agnus Dei*, a relique, or an image; and God, who should be the only object of their devotion, hath hardly any share therein. I do not require our christian should be learned, and that he should have dived either into the secrets of nature, or even into the sublime mysteries of grace, by a too exact or too curious an enquiry. I think indeed, that this is rather prejudicial than useful to devotion: But the devout soul must yet be spiritual enough to raise it self above the senses by meditation. Meditation is an excellent operation of the soul, by which it penetrates through the superficies of objects, and sounds them

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them to the heart; 'tis a reflex action, that rolls it subject in the heart, to make some good impressions there. 'Tis a blessed view, by which the soul discovers every moment some wonderful things in what she handles: But these discoveries are not curious speculations which may be communicated to others; they are sensations and particular applications that the soul makes to herself, and which are only for her. One cannot doubt but this is of absolute necessity to devotion; for the soul comprehends its subject but as meditation lets it in. Devotion is a vigorous lively motion of the soul, by which we raise our selves to God, as to our supreme good; and therefore the more meditation applies us to this great object, and lets us see the source of his goodness, the more ardent becomes our devotion. So that this ought to be the principal subject of our contemplations. God is good, both in himself, and with respect to us. In himself, because he is great, powerful, majestick, kind, gracious, and merciful; and though we
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should have no share in the effects of these divine virtues, yet God would nevertheless possess them, and consequently would be infinitely amiable. One cannot think too often on these virtues of God; 'tis one of the most powerful means that *David* used to awaken his sleeping devotion, *Awaken thou my tongue*, saith he, and thereupon he celebrates the power of God in his works, his majesty which shines forth in the heavens, his justice in his judgments, his wisdom in the ordering the world, and his clemency towards men. But because interest is so powerful with us, we must join to this consideration that of God's benefits. We must descend into the depths of his love, and consider him reconciling to himself the world through Christ Jesus: We must endeavour to penetrate if possible into the bottom of his mercy that appears in all places, and in every part of the work of our salvation: But above all, we cannot sufficiently stay our thoughts upon the passion of our Lord Jesus. There we shall find a thousand objects capable of softning

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softning the soul, for the love of God appears in its full extent. From general considerations, it is good to come to particular applications. We must conceive how much we owe to God, from having disingaged us from so many miseries, to raise us to such glorious hopes. In a word, the object of our meditation is as vast and comprehensive as God and all nature and grace together; for there is no flower from whence we cannot gather honey; we need not therefore fear to exhaust our thoughts, in a subject of such great extent. Whence comes it then, our meditations are often dry, and our reflexions so barren? This comes not from the seed, but from the bad ground? *Whence comes it, saith St. Basil, that our minds find themselves so destitute of good thoughts, as tho' there were nothing agreeable to God, that we can entertain our selves with. It comes not, says he, but from the soul's negligence; for the subject is inexhaustible: And if the eye cannot find an end of the wonderful things it sees, how much less the mind of what it conceives?*
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If the eyes cease to see light, when it is day, 'tis not because that light is extinguished, but because the sight is hindred. If thou openest, and turnest up a whole field with the plough, it will return thee a plentiful crop; otherwise it will remain barren: And if thou diggest deep enough, thou shalt come to springs of living water: In like manner, if thou turnest over this great subject, to wit, God and his works, by deep and frequent meditations, there will flow out sources of consolations and instructions. But now make no difficulty often to go over the same subject, that it may be familiar to you. Our soul is dependent on the body, whilst we live here on earth; and the most spiritual ideas are form'd in us by corporeal motions. It is therefore very useful to pass and repass often in our selves the thoughts of heavenly things, to the end we may give the animal spirits a tendency to that side; and thence it will come in time, that they will naturally flow that way: So that without designing it, our thoughts will be often employ'd on good things.

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I will add one word more for the comfort of those souls who are neither capable of penetration, nor of great application. That is, that they should not be much afflicted if they find not themselves strong enough to carry these reasonings so far as we have been advising; or if their conceptions fail them; provided these proceed not from indifferency. Short but frequent meditations, by which a good soul of an ordinary capacity shall often reflect on the author of his salvation, and on his favours, may serve instead of long reflexions, when one is not capable of them.

For the help of meditation, we must certainly call in the aid of good books; for we must not think to draw all from our own stock; and amongst these books the holy scriptures excel as much as God excels man, and the sun the stars of the sixth magnitude. It is this word that is more powerful and penetrating than any two-edged sword; it is that fire which heats us inwardly, and makes us say, *Does not our heart burn with-*
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in us? One single passage of *St. Paul*, *Live not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strifes and envyings, but put ye on the Lord Jesus*, compleated the conversion of *St. Austin*. In every page of this scripture we shall find God's favours, graces, and precious promises, so proper to awaken our devotion. There we shall also find many holy meditations proper to raise the heart, and guide us in forming ours. Above all, the book of *Psalms* is an inestimable treasure for devout souls; and though we could exceed all that the antients have said of it, we could not yet however say enough of it. It were to be wish'd this treasure might be all entire in our memory, that we might every moment repeat it to our heart. We should, if it were possible, habituate our mind to conceive its thoughts, and form its meditations, in such terms only as the holy spirit uses in these *Psalms*.

To the reading of the holy scripture, 'tis well to join also the reading of other good books; and I will hereupon give an

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an advice that some persons have found beneficial; and that is to chuse such lessons and chapters of devotion as have once affected you, and to return frequently to them, that your heart may get a custom of being reviv'd at their sight. 'Tis the ordinary course of all tempers to join certain motions of the heart to certain images; so that as soon as the images present themselves to the mind, the motions arise in the heart. For example, if a man has run some extreme hazzard in a wood, the image of a wood shall hardly ever strike his imagination, but his heart shall be agitated by fears: So our hearts being once moved at the reading of some pious discourse that has lively affected it, will never fail being moved at the presence of those same thoughts, provided we read them with devout intention, and with design to be affected. I compare this to that which happens to dogs that bark; they presently leave off, as soon as they hear the voices that are familiar to them: So the heart having made familiar to its self godly thoughts which have

have often excited it, will feel continually in their presence much the same emotions; for 'tis not with sacred lectures as 'tis with profane ones: These please the first time; the second time the pleasure is no more; but the third time they disgust. The same thing may happen upon reading a book of devotion, when read for divertisement, to see the neatness of the phrase, or the delicacy of the sentiments; as this kind of reading is for the mind, and not for the heart, one thing will not please you a second time. This thought discovers to us a mystery sufficiently obscure; namely, why that which affects one man affects not others: It is from hence, that all men read not the same thing with the same dispositions, nor with the same intentions. A preacher who would speak an hour upon a subject of piety, will read books to instruct him therein; but if he has not a soul naturally devout, they will not affect him, because he comes not to them with intention to be affected, he only seeks for matter to fill up his hour. Our heart does almost
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what we would; so that the reading good books, in order to their being a help to our devotion, must be attended with a very devout intention; without this circumstance no great success can be hoped for.

But as much as devotion is aided by the reading good books, so much is it prejudiced by the reading bad ones. 'Tis a great shame to christianity, that there are more bad books publish'd now than when paganism was at the height of its corruption. This age, and in particular this nation, may be justly branded with infamy, for this swarm of romances, which the effeminacy of our hearts, the corruption of our souls, and the craft of the devil, have brought into the world. We must needs be great lovers of lies, when fifty years have produc'd more fables, than six thousand Years have produc'd histories. Every devout soul should have the reading of these things in abhorrence; for nothing certainly more disorders the heart. I grant, we may not fall into the utmost corruption by these false examples. But

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this, at least, is certain, that the mind returns from reading these mischievous books, fill'd with such cursed images as drive away and grieve the spirit of God, and are absolutely incompatible with the spirit of devotion.

MEDITATION.

If thou art ignorant, my soul, in the things that regard thy salvation, 'tis wholly thy own fault: Thy God opens two great books before thine eyes, where thou may'st instruct thy self in the wondrous things of heaven and thy salvation. I have often cast my eyes on nature, on the heavens, on the earth, on the mountains, on the rivers, on the fields, on the forests; I have often directed my sight even to the planets and the stars: But I own, to my confusion, that these contemplations were unfruitful; they were done carelessly, without attention and without reflection. Do thou, O my soul, for the future, what thou hast never done well hitherto: Look on the heavens and admire their grandeur and vast extent: Acknowledge the excellency

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of the workman, his power, his wisdom, and his might: See how he hath made it as it were his task to paint himself in all places, and leave the traces of his steps wherever he hath passed. Look on the sun which scatters so many rays, and which men call the light of the world: 'Tis the image of thy God, who is light it self. With him is the fountain of life, and in his light do we see light. This innumerable multitude of stars which shine in the firmament, are the emblems of those glorious souls who shine in the heaven of the blest. The swiftnes of those vast prodigious machines that roll above my head, should make thee, O my soul, think on the mighty arm, which set them a going, and gives them their motions. The equality and justnes of these motions, which are as regular as rapid, preach to thee the wisdom and regularity of the actions of thy God; who does nothing but what is just and reasonable. The magnificence of these visible heavens, may without straining, lead thy meditation to the thought of another life, and give thee some conception of the glory God hath prepar'd for

thee in paradise. These visible heavens, so fair and so magnificent, are but the porch and entry of that palace, where God hath prepared thee a mansion. O my soul, how stately and how noble must the house then be, whose avenues and entries are so pompous and so rich! If from the heavens thou descendest to the air, which is the region of storms and of tempests, of rains and of dews, in the last thou wilt see the emblems of the grace of God, and in the first thou wilt see the instruments of his wrath, and the messengers of his vengeance. The one will lead thee to the meditation of his justice, and the other to the consideration of his mercy. If thou descendest down to the earth, thou wilt there discover, round about thee, an incredible number of objects of all sorts, who will instruct thee variously: Some will speak to thee of God, of his wisdom, and of his power, as well as the heavens: Others will speak to thee of thy weakness, of thy vanity, of death, of the necessity of dying, of the inconstancy of human affairs, and will give thee an hundred other lessons. But all this is nothing

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to the value of that knowledge which thou wilt obtain from the reading that other book which God hath dictated to his prophets and to his apostles: In that, O my soul, thou may'st see the unsearchable depths of his divine wisdom, the infinity of his love, and the extensiveness of his mercy. Without diving far into these depths, what fruits may we not gather from the death of our saviour, and the contemplation of his cross? There thou wilt learn, my soul, how thou should'st love, for that is the school of love: There thou wilt see thy heavenly saviour, consum'd with the zeal of God's house, and burning with the flames of charity. He so loved the world, that he gave himself for the world to death it self, yea, a cruel death too, the shameful one of the cross. He exposed himself to all the arrows of God's wrath; he hath drawn out all the poison, and bore the weight of his indignation; and for whom? For his enemies. 'Tis thus, my soul, that we must love. This is but a very small part of those things which may be learn'd in this divine book.

P R A Y E R.

P R A Y E R.

But, O my God, I read without fruit ; I meditate without success. Spread thy light abroad into my heart, O thou my sun ; open mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things of thy law : Let thy word be in me as a two-edged sword, to the dividing of my soul to the joints and marrow : Thy word is truth it self, sanctify me by thy truth. Let my heart burn within me while thou talkest and openest to me thy scriptures : Let me receive this word with a thirsty soul, and let it be to me a spring of living waters which may spout up to everlasting life, and bring me by the streams of thy grace to the ocean of thy glory.



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C H A P. IX.

The Fourth particular Advice to help Devotion ; Prayer.

I Design not here to make a panegyrick on prayer, nor set forth all its uses ; both antients and moderns have done it at large : I will only say, 'tis one of the surest means to purify the soul, because there is no action by which we approach so near to God ; there is likewise no time where he communicates himself more freely to us ; he hath often been observed to have given his extraordinary inspirations to men amidst their prayers ; St. *Peter* in praying fell into an extasy ; St. *Paul* was caught up into the third heaven : *Cornelius* at his prayers had the vision of the angel ; St. *Monica*, Mother of St. *Austin*, after her prayers and tears for the salvation of her son, received in a dream that excellent revelation of the conversion of this son. An angel tells her, *Afflict not thy self, thy son is with thee.* As God
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is the sun of our soul, when he throws his rays directly on our hearts, he needs must both enlighten them, and warm them ; he must needs dissipate the vapours of the lower part, and leave his image there. Now this communication of the rays of his grace is never more amply bestowed than in prayer.

I will not enlarge upon examining the conditions with which prayers should be made, to be devout : We know well enough they must be intent, constant and earnest. I will only advise two things, the one to avoid faintness or weariness, the other to avoid distraction : First I say, that few souls are capable of long prayers ; for to render a prayer wholly devout, there must be an earnest application of the mind, an extraordinary elevation, and an entire detachment from the world. Now these things do a kind of violence to the mind, which naturally inclines to unbend it self, and therefore they cannot last long ; if we do not give the heart this relaxation, it takes it, and wanders against our will, I would then that the exercises of devotion

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tion should be long, but divided into small portions; that they should have many parts; and that each of these should be short. Devotion is made up of three principal exercises, meditation, reading, and prayer. I would not that each of these exercises should be immediately after the other; but that they should be mix'd: We must indulge something to the weakness of the soul, and keep it from aversion by variety. A little reading will be the first step of its elevation; a little meditation on that reading will raise it one step higher; and after that a short prayer will bring it to the highest degree of affection. After this it will return a-new to reading and to meditation in the same order. In prayer the soul will fly into the air by the strength of its own wings; and returning to reading will do like those birds who, weary of flying, sit down and rest themselves, but not upon the ground, and who chuse some tree of extraordinary height. Our devout person in like manner will rest himself, not by falling on the ground, for he will not set his foot

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there, nor will he suffer his mind to return to the world, but will keep it elevated by the support of the holy prophets and apostles. *Aaron* and *Hur* will keep it hoisted up towards heaven, and taking thence its flight, it will rise by little and little upon the wings of meditation, till it return again by prayer, to where it first was lifted up. This method undoubtedly will afford it time to recover its forces: We cannot last long, when all our strength is put forth in the race; but by taking breath, and marching gently from time to time, one may go a great way in a day.

The other advice I would give, respects those, who not having employ'd themselves in the operations of the mind, cannot attain to a sublimity of stile. These persons commonly perform their devotions by prayers which they have got by heart; a way from which distractions are almost inseparable. I would advise them therefore to endeavour to detach themselves from words, and regard only the sense: I do not mean they should do this in their family-prayers, I know very well

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well that every one has not the gift of forming his thoughts, and putting them immediately into words proper to edify the publick: But for the devotions of the closet, they should be from the heart rather than from the head. When the imagination makes no attempt to bring out its thoughts, or for the choice of its words, but following a road which it fears not losing, it seldom fails of stepping out, and calling somewhere by the way, as having little to do in the place where you would detain it: But when it must attend to the manner of expressing fitly the conceptions of the heart, the heart and imagination then joining their forces make up the attention compleat. I can't bear to be told, that every one is not capable of composing prayers: All are not indeed capable of composing for men, but for God they are. Let us try to express our selves never so well, we shall but lisp, as it were, before God; and between the most eloquent, and him who is least so, there can be no other difference with respect to God,

than as one infant to another. God hears and understands all languages and styles; he asks for neither order, nor elegance; the most confused thoughts, that rise in crouds from the heart, are often the most agreeable to him. He understands the sighs of the dumb; and knows what we would have, altho' we cannot say, nor sometimes even conceive it. *For the spirit of God, says St. Paul, makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* After all, there are none but know well what they want; and consequently there are none who cannot pray: For prayer is nothing but a chain of desires of those things we want, for the present life, and that to come. The passions are eloquent, and the imagination warms it self by sympathy with the heart: And hence it comes, that such as excuse themselves for the lowness of their understanding, when they are in wrath, never want words. Certainly, if their heart were heated by the fire of devotion, the imagination would be sensible of it, and they

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they never would complain of the want of thoughts or expressions.

MEDITATION.

Thou hast never rightly understood, my soul, how far thy God hath honoured thee, in suffering thee to throw thy self at his feet, thou art not sensible of this favour; thou thinkest even, that God is thy debtor, for humbling thy self before him; thou never remembrest, tht audiences are not easily obtain'd of earthly princes, who yet in God's sight are but shadows and meer nothings. The King of Kings is very willing to lend thee his ear, to hear thee, to help thee, his throne is of easy access every minute; thou needest not, to approach thereto, nor credit, nor favour, nor friends, nor painful solicitations, nor any troublesome attendances. And yet, what is his throne, and how great its glory, and its magnificence? God is seated thereon, encircled with a light whose lustre dazzles even the eyes of seraphims; round him are thousands and ten thousands of angels and arch-angels, prostrating themselves before him;

on his right hand are rivers of milk and honey, which he giveth his children to drink; on his left, torrents of fire, to consume his enemies: On one side, are hell and death, and all the dreadful executioners of the divine vengeance: On the other, are heaven and paradise, with all the glorious recompences God hath prepar'd for those that love him. Thou seest not this, my soul, and therefore thou art but little affected therewith; but thou must needs believe it, altho' the veil of the flesh deprives thee of the sight of it. Represent then to thy self, the magnificence of this throne, admire, and tremble, and be fill'd with acknowledgements, that though thou art corrupted by the commerce thou hast with a wretched body, abiding in a house of clay, and having thy seat in the dust, as thou hast, thou art yet at liberty to present thy self each moment before him who sitteth between the cherubims, and flieth upon the wings of the wind, who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. Thou hast the permission to pray, but thou knowest not, my soul, how thou should'st pray; this comes from
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thy not knowing how to love. *A friend never wants something to say to an intimate friend: When our heart is entirely opened to any one, and we are permitted to pour ourselves into his bosom, we never hesitate, or stop short. Ah, my soul, if thou did'st perfectly love thy God, thou never would'st be weary of entertaining him; thy imagination never would be frozen, thy tongue never be mute; and thou would'st never want expression; thy heart would diffuse it self like a stream, and thy prayers would roll as the flame: But thou languishest in thy prayers, because thou speakest not to thy God, as to thy intimate friend; the barrenness of thy heart proceeds from the coldness of thy love to God.*

P R A Y E R.

O holy Ghost, who art the very love of the most adorable trinity; Spirit of prayers, make intercession for me, by sighs, silent, broken, and which can scarce express themselves; teach me how I must pray: I do partly know what should be the subject of my prayers, but I know

know not how to give them form ; I perceive in my self a chaos of thoughts, and confused notions, which I cannot ſeperate: The light is confounded with the darkneſs ; worldly thoughts with heavenly. Divine ſpirit, who, in the beginning of the world, in a like chaos, drewſt the light from darkneſs, and order from confuſion, ſtretch out thy wings again now over the chaos of my thoughts, and cauſe thence to come forth prayers well conceived, well formed, and well digeſted : Thou makeſt the dumb to ſpeak, and thou giveſt eloquence to thoſe who ſtammered ; touch my tongue with a coal from thy altar, that my lips may be purified ; that my mouth may be opened, and that I may ſhew forth thy praiſe : Warm my heart, and fill it with pious and devout ſentiments, that out of the abundance of my heart my mouth may ſpeak. And thou, O Lord, mediator of the new covenant, our great high-prieſt, receive my prayers as the incenſe, and bear them to the preſence of that adorable throne on which thy father ſits ; make
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them to fume before him; cause him to smell an odour of reconciliation to arise from these sacrifices, and let him accept these calves of my lips; and because my offerings are imperfect, cover thou them with thy perfect righteousness; obtain by thy intercession that which my prayers alone never can obtain.

C H A P. X.

The Fifth particular Advice for the help of Devotion; Fasting and Mortification.

WE cannot deny, but fasting and mortification are very necessary helps to devotion, unless we will deny the scriptures, and the maxims of the fathers of the church. The scriptures seldom separate prayer from fasting; and to both of them joyn'd together it gives the power of casting out the most dangerous devils. *This kind of devil goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.* The flesh is a rampant horse, which we cannot manage

manage, but by keeping a tight rein: 'Tis a lion which we must not pamper, if we would not increase his cruelty, and endanger his destroying us: The body, if you observe it well, is the very flesh, of which the scriptures complain so strongly, and in so many places: Of which it is said, that it is an enemy to God; and its fruits are revellings, seditions, murthers, adulteries, contentions, strifes, envyings, ambition and avarice. Wherefore, to hinder the production of these fruits, 'tis good to keep this plant in great drought; for if we water with carnal pleasures this root of bitterness, it will shoot forth its branches on high, and will turn us from the way of our salvation. As plants which grow apace, and surmount their neighbours, leave them in a bad state, by drawing to themselves all the fat of the earth; so the flesh never fattens, but at the expence of the soul, which it leaves in great drought of consolations, and an extream barrenness of fruits. A great meal is but an ill preparation for the exercises of devotion; one cannot be in the

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the kitchen and the closet at the same time; and whilst the mind is in its stoves, busied in ordering and cooking its victuals, and in distributing its aliments, it cannot stir to places appointed for meditation and contemplation. There are thick clouds, and gross vapours, that are rising from the stomach, which render the heart unfit for every exalted work. *The abundance of delicate meats, saith St. Basil, send up sooty exhalations, like clouds that obscure the enlightening which the mind receives from the holy Ghost: And therefore Moses, that he might contemplate upon God, without any cloud to interpose, continued forty days and nights upon the mountain, without either meat or drink, that the superior faculties of his soul might be free and disengaged from the trouble and obscurity of the inferior part.* Ease and abundance make the sins of Sodom; and the impurities of life are the effects of the excesses of the mouth. By high feeding the blood is enflamed, and this causes a disposition to all carnal actions, and an inclination to worldly pleasures, which is always immo-

immoderate. *The people sat down to eat, and to drink, and rose up to play.* 'Tis therefore of absolute necessity to observe the rules of sobriety, and to nourish the body only for its subsistence: We must give it what is necessary, and refuse it what is superfluous, that it may never be in a condition to rebel against us. Nay, we must oft retrench its necessities, the better to keep it under. For the flesh being mortified, contributes much to the contrition of the heart; and the less a soul is united to its body, the more easily does such a soul take its flight towards God. In fasting our devotions are not interrupted by sleep; they are not perverted by involuntary motions, they are not depraved by dishonest thoughts.

However concerning fasting, there are several directions to be given: First, We must not look upon it as a part of devotion, and worship, by which God is served; *for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, 'tis only a help to devotion. This first consideration helps us to another; and that is, that we must not

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not regard fasting but in the case of devotion; for to fast when we ride, or take a journey, or in any of our affairs, is not a work of great merit, or of great use. The first consideration also furnishes us with a third; that is, that fasting need not be used in devotion any oftner than it is assistant to it; and consequently, we cannot give any certain rules either for its practice, or its continuance. There are also some tempers so weak, that fasting, far from being a help to their devotions, may hurt it; because it presently throws the body into a certain negligence and dullness, which hinders the soul from elevating it self. Others there are, who cannot be subdued but by long mortifications, and these should not spare themselves. Some there are who can more easily keep themselves in subjection, and such ought to know themselves; but yet they must take heed, that the weakness of their constitution serve them not for a pretence to dispense with their necessary mortifications.

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We cannot however approve the cruelties some exercise upon their bodies, treating them as declar'd enemies, even without sparing either fire or sword. We will not meddle here with controversy, we leave every one to their own conscience. We only say, that though these excesses are not new, yet they are not the better. Church-history, I confess, furnishes us with many examples of these excessive mortifications; but I had rather keep to the decision of *St. Basil*, who ought not to be suspected in this cause, for he was a great stickler for fastings and mortifications: Yet he frequently repeats the precept of moderation, and insists very much upon it: He forbids his virgins and his monks to take pleasure in excessive mortifications, and says, in his *Book of virginity*, *That the burthen of the flesh that is heavy and exceedingly pampered, is no greater a hindrance to the raising up the soul, than the feebleness of a body sick and macerated by a long excessive mortification*: And therefore he expressly orders, That necessity should be the rule of fasting and abstinence.

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Another necessary piece of advice on this occasion, is, that fasting and corporal mortification strike not to the bottom of the soul, nor mortify all sorts of sin. *St. Basil* says, *That the devil not being able to possess himself of a body humbled by great mortifications, seizes on a soul that is wholly naked, and thereby, and therein begins and consummates carnal desires.* If the soul, without the body, is capable of committing corporal sins in spite of all mortification, how should it cure it self thereby of such distempers as are entirely therein, such as envy, pride and self-love? And we see that these passions commonly reign with greater sway in the souls of these men of hair-cloath, scourges, and macerations, than elsewhere. This cruel war which is made on the body, which seems a renouncing all self-love, is yet perhaps in most but a very delicate self-love, which tends to vain glory by extraordinary ways, to attain it the more certainly. From all this I conclude, that the mortification *St. Paul* requires, when he bids us, *Mortify our members which are upon earth;*
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and that which we have judg'd necessary to devotion, goes farther than bodily mortification. To stifle this self-love, this pride, these jealousies, these hatreds, these envyings, and even avarice and ambition, there is need of another kind of fasting, that is, an abstaining from all such actions as may nourish those vices. I now conclude this chapter and this treatise, with these excellent words of *St. Basil*, *Take heed to thy self, that thou definest not the excellence of fasting, by abstaining only from eating; for a true fast consists in abstinence from evil. Thou eatest no flesh; but thou devourest thy neighbour: Thou abstainest from wine, but thou abstainest not from doing outrage: Thou waitest for the evening before thou wilt eat, but thou spendest the day in wranglings: Woe to them that are drunk, and not with wine. Anger is the drunkenness of the soul, that deprives it of the use of reason, as certainly as wine.*

MEDITATION.

'Tis a dangerous drunkenness, I confess, that of wine, and an abominable sin, that of gluttony; these sins are great enemies to devotion; therefore fasting, abstinence, and sobriety, are very necessary, to assist and promote piety. But take good heed my soul to thy own self, these vices principally respect the body. There is another drunkenness, another gluttony, which are practised immediately by the soul, and are, it may be, much more dangerous. This drunkenness is pride, this gluttony is covetousness and ambition. How many souls do I see in the world drunk with vanity, and a high opinion of themselves! They are so exalted with pride, that all this world cannot contain them; so far do they extend, and so high do they raise themselves: This drunkenness causes them to make a thousand false steps, and a thousand stumbles. Their ways are all oblique and crooked, as the ways of drunkards. They have always a great opinion of their own wisdom, their power and their prudence;

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all this often fails them; they reel up and down, and at last they fall. For pride, says the wise man, goes before a fall. Examine well thy self, my soul, see if thou art not tainted with this evil, and if thou art not drunk with the thoughts of thy own justness, and thy own deserts. Alas, if thou deniest this, thou provest it. 'Tis great pride to think one has no pride; for 'tis to think you are as good indeed, as you esteem your self; but no man in the world but esteems himself better than he truly is. Thou wilt say, it may be, that thou hast a very ill opinion of thy self; but be assured, my soul, thou dost not despise thy self so much as thou art truly despicable: If thou dost despise thy self indeed, thou makest a merit of that very thing, so that pride is attach'd to this very contempt of thy self. The other vice which is the gluttony of the soul, is no less dangerous. Seest thou, my soul, those men who devour and continually are destroying their prey, and never say, it is enough; these ambitious and these covetous persons who suck the substance of the poor, who devour the people of God as their food; or who at least labour

labour with inconceivable greediness to enrich and aggrandise themselves, who search the limits of the world, and find no end of their desires, which may mount to the highest pitch of grandeur, but which cannot fill the height of their ambition! Take heed, my soul, of launching out to these excesses: For he that is an hungred after silver, shall never be satisfied with silver. Quench then the fire of thy covetousness; for if thou furnisheth it with food, thou wilt encrease it; it will devour thy very entrails, and cause perhaps such a flame as may consume thee, and thy neighbours. I must not then neglect bodily fasting; but the principal fast is humility, which will preserve me from the drunkenness of pride, and the content of mind, which will make me despise things superfluous, and will cause me to be content with things necessary. This is the true sobriety of the soul; these two virtues go hand in hand. Be humble, O my soul, and thou wilt be contented with thy fortune; know the little thou art worthy of, and thou wilt be persuaded, that thou hast more than thou deservest.

P R A Y E R.

Alas! my God, make me to understand my vileness, and my nothingness! 'Tis very sure that I am nothing, but yet I cannot confess as much; my mouth indeed says it, but my heart agrees not thereto; and I still find within me the devil of pride, soliciting me, and saying softly to me; Fool that thou art, why do'st thou speak with so much contempt of thy self? If thou do'st not esteem thy self, who shall esteem thee? Are men oblig'd to have a better opinion of thee than thou thy self hast; since thou should'st know thy self better than they can know thee? If I humble my self before thee, O God, 'tis because I look upon it as a thing of no disparagement; the proportion betwixt my self and thee being so infinitely great; but with men I observe the nicest punctilio; I endeavour to deceive them, and give them a great opinion of me; I would preserve my rank; I would be respected; I cannot bear contempt. O my Jesus, who humbled thy self to death, inspire into me thy

thy humility, and recover me from my pride; that being persuaded that I merit nothing, I may be always content with what thou givest me; that piety and content of mind may be my great gain; provided I have food and rayment that that may suffice me.

C H A P. XI.

*Of the rash Judgment that is made against
the Devout.*

I Have given the advices which I have thought necessary to help devotion. But before I end, I believe, I owe a word of consolation to such as are truly devout, of whom there is so hard a judgment passed in the world. They are all of them commonly put into the rank of hypocrites: Those are bigots, say the prophane, who observe forms so exactly, who are found so constantly at the exercises of piety, who lend such great attention to a sermon, who pray and communicate with so many visible tokens

kens of devotion : We are, say they, nevertheless good christians for having less affectation ; we have that which is solid in piety, and others have the appearances. We must own, that hypocrisy does a great deal of mischief to devotion. I do not deny but that there are bigots ; there is no veil with which evil consciences do more commonly cover themselves, than that of piety ; but because there are hypocrites and bigots, is it a consequence there should be no truly devout people ? Because we find false diamonds, can we find no real diamonds ; because there are false lights, is there then no true light ? There are some who think they have found a good remedy for this evil ; and that is, they affect an appearing neglect of devotion ; for having at the bottom some zeal, they imagine it necessary to affect, in publick, a stye, and air of indifference, to avoid the accusation of hypocrisy. But this is to avoid one evil by a much greater evil ; and being reduc'd to the necessity of either committing a fault our selves, or occasioning another to do so,

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so, we must resolve upon the latter. We are called to let our light shine in good works before men, and to edify our neighbours by our good examples. Woe then to such as place the candle under the bushel. But to say truth, I believe, that those who make it their business thus to hide their devotion, conceal no great matter from us; they have very little of it within. When a chamber is full of fire, the flames go out of the windows. Piety is a fire, which throws its flames through every open passage, and nothing can hinder them. If the heart be full of zeal and piety, it will appear upon the tongue, in the hands, and even in the eyes. 'Tis true, we must avoid affectation; God abhors those ostentations of piety, which expose themselves at the corners of the streets, and which consist only in the elevations of the hands, in rolling the eyes, and in pale countenances; the most secret devotions are always the best. But how easy is it to distinguish affectation from sincerity: Did the prophane know themselves never so little,

tle, they would not confound a modest piety, and sober devotion, which shine not but through the veil of a profound humility, with a devotion made up of grimaces. The life and behaviour are the touch-stone for knowing the sincerity of devotion. If the devout person be covetous, ambitious, one who enriches himself at the expence of the poor, passionate and revengeful, I consent he shall be plac'd amongst the hypocrites. But if his life is in all respects unblameable, 'tis a sin, to be punish'd with the flames of hell, to judge that his devotion is dissembled; 'tis a kind of sin against the holy Ghost, like that of the *Pharisees* against our Lord, when they accused him of doing that by the help of the devil, which he did by the finger of God, and by his spirit. These prophane persons do the same thing; they attribute to the evil spirit of hypocrisy, the works of God's spirit. But, say they, if these devout people appear regular in their lives, it is because they have the address to conceal

conceal their impurities ; the love of their reputation engages them in such continued precautions, as deprive the publick of the knowledge of their crimes. But is not this violating all sort of rights ; invading even those of God himself ; to pretend thus to dive into the very heart ? Is not this violating the asylums of secrecy, to judge so confidently, of what appears by no way whatever ? Is it not even to go against all the rules of good sense, to judge a man to be wicked, because he appears to be good ? To conclude ; were I obliged to declare for the hypocrite, or the profane libertine, I should banish this rather than the former : The hypocrite at least is half a christian, tho' he have the worst share of it ; his outward behaviour is edifying, and his false piety may kindle the true. But the libertine has nothing good, either within or without ; he offends God, scandalizes his neighbour, ruins his own, and other mens salvation. I end therefore, with advising the religious to affect nothing ;

to take great heed that he hide not his devotion under the veil of indifference, to please the profane; to be constant in frequenting holy assemblies; to hear with attention; to pray with ardour; not to dispense with the outward acts of humility, but without running into extravagant appearances of it. And after this, let him endeavour to raise himself above the censure of the wicked; God who sees the sincerity of his heart, will recompence it, and will punish most severely these rash judges.

MEDITATION.

What a folly is it, to dread more the rash judgment of men, than the just judgment of God! But yet my heart reproaches me with this crime. How often have I found in my self an inclination to do good, and have been hindered by a wicked shame? I avoid making my self remarkable by any singularity, and therefore I am commonly of the croud. How oft have I been dis-
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posed to have talked of good things, yet have lent an ear to conversations either vain or sinful? Not only have I lent them an ear, but have joyn'd in them. How often have I met with the profane, whose wicked words I had in true abhorrence, yet I suffered and approved of them by my silence? How frequently hath it happened to me inwardly to condemn certain parties of pleasure, in which however I have suffered my self to be engag'd, for want of courage to say No: Curse on thee thou fatal deadly stream of custom? Who is there that is strong enough to withstand thee? Wilt thou never be dry? How long wilt thou force the sons of Eve into this vast and perilous ocean, where those can hardly save themselves, who get upon the tree or cross of Jesus Christ? Alas, my soul; if thou follow the croud, thou wilt perish with the croud: Thou wilt not be the less miserable for going to hell with company. The society and multitude of the damned diminishes not their pains: Seek not therefore the approbation and the praise of men, at the expence of thy conscience and

thy salvation : That is to purchase, at too dear a rate, wind and smoke. What signifies it to thee, what men judge of thee; provided God, who sees thy inwards, judges well? In the world, sins obtain rewards, and pompous vices are applauded; but comfort thy self in the assurance, another life will come, in which all shall receive their due. Then the rash judgment of men shall be made void by the judgment of God. The Lord Jesus Christ will confess thee before his Father and the holy angels, and will say, Come, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord: He will rebuke, in the sight of heaven and earth, of men and angels, those rash persons who daily violate that law of equity, Judge not, that ye be not judged. Seek therefore, O my soul, oh seek to be approv'd of God; walk before him and be perfect; be not a slave to custom; be not conformable to the manners of this evil world; think continually on him, before whose eyes thou walkest, and who must be the rewarder of all thy works, or the avenger of all thy sins; get far
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from the society of the profane, that thou may'st not be infected with their contagion; and since thou canst not subdue their evil habits by thy good examples, take heed their bad examples subdue not thy good habits.

P R A Y E R.

Oh my God, my saviour and redeemer, come to my assistance; the stream bears me away, the current of the water overpowers me: I swim; I do my endeavour; but still am carried down, and am engag'd more and more in the flood of corruption which infects the world. I condemn vain words and actions, and the evil customs, enemies to modesty, simplicity, sobriety, and christian purity: But yet I suffer myself to be led into them. Take me by the right hand, O Lord Jesus, my conducting angel, conduct me by thy good spirit in this sharp and difficult way. The world is a dangerous sea, it is always disturb'd with tempests, and we never there see any calm: It is full of

shelves and rocks, famous for a prodigious number of wrecks. O Lord Jesus Christ, be thou my pilot: Blessed spirit, be thou my north-star, in this dangerous navigation; that I may escape the many depths that open their gaping mouths to take me in: Enlighten me in this dark night, that I may not stray; and that avoiding the cross roads, so trodden and frequented by the worldlings, I may march on in the king's high-way, tho' it be never so deserted; that I may go on in the ways of piety, of justice and of devotion, which thou hast marked out to us; and that in these good roads, I may advance continually, in leaving the world and sin behind me, that I may tend to the mark, to the prize, to the possession of heaven, to which thou hast called me. O my God, grant that I may arrive at last to that most blessed place; to that port, where I shall be shelter'd from all tempests; to that heaven, where I shall see thy face in righteousness, where I shall be satisfied with thy likeness,

ness, where I shall see thee without end, where I shall possess thee without weariness, and where I shall be happy to all eternity. A M E N.

FINIS.



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